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LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS  
OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE.









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# LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS

OF

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE.

BY

W. H. BERNARD SAUNDERS.

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ILLUSTRATED WITH COLLOTYPE AND WOODBURY PRINTS  
FROM "DRAYTON'S POLY-ALBION," &c.

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DEDICATION.

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THIS VOLUME, EMBODYING THE  
LEGENDS, TRADITIONS, AND ROMANCES  
OF THE  
COUNTY OF HUNTINGDON, IS GRATEFULLY  
DEDICATED TO  
LORD ESMÉ STUART GORDON,  
AS A SLIGHT ACKNOWLEDGMENT  
OF THE ASSISTANCE  
RENDERED TO THE AUTHOR  
BY LOANS GENEROUSLY PERMITTED  
FROM HIS LORDSHIP'S HUNTINGDONSHIRE  
COLLECTION, AT PAXTON HALL.

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## PREFACE.

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The object of the present volume is to furnish in a few short sketches some of the more interesting and curious incidents which relate to the County of Huntingdon. They are not encumbered by dry statistics, genealogical tables, registers of land sales, or other matters which may be of interest to the archæologist, but which have no attraction for the ordinary reader. The historic legends and incidents recorded will be found to command a wider interest than a more connected, but drier, narrative could possibly do. Thus the present volume will, in a small and concise form, supply a general review of the history of the County, in a manner suitable to popular tastes. Each Chapter, to a great extent, tells the story of an historic episode ; or furnishes a group of such incidents. The work is issued with a full knowledge of its many shortcomings and failings. It is not intended to be a manorial history ; it does not profess to give a record of the County families ; it



does not touch the all absorbing subject of the Parish Churches in the County. Further than that, there are no doubt many historical incidents which find no place in its pages. Some of these have been purposely rejected on the ground of the slender evidence on which they rest, or because they were not of sufficient interest, and their insertion would have unduly swelled the limits of the work. The object of the writer has been to collect as much fresh matter as possible, and the result has been that the greater part of the volume is taken up with historic incidents and legends which are fresh and new, and have never been published in any work on the County previously. Thus the volume will probably be valuable to historical students, as well as fulfilling its chief aim of popularising the subject with which it deals.

The Author wishes to express his gratitude to LORD ESMÉ STUART GORDON for much valuable assistance received; also to Mr. DACK, of Peterborough; Mr. W. EMERY, of St. Neots; Rev. J. PINDER, of Godmanchester; Mr. W. BRYANT, of Huntingdon; Mr. CARTER, of Kimbolton; and many others. The illustrations are produced by Mr. G. C. CASTER, Cathedral Studio, Peterborough.

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A  
STRANGE  
AND  
True Relation

Of One  
Mr. JOHN LEECH;  
*Who*

Lived in HUNTINGTON-Shire,  
at a place called *Ravely*, not farre di-  
stant from *Huntington Town*, who was  
(about ten dayes agoe) carried twelve  
miles in the *Ayre*, by two *Finnes*, and  
also of his sad and lamentable death.

Attested by *Persons* of unquestionable  
Credit, who have hereunto set  
their Hands.

<i>John webber</i>	} Gent.	<i>Frances Hall</i>	} <i>Y. J.</i>
<i>Mery Holkins</i>		<i>James Smith</i>	
<i>Robert Shipton</i>		<i>Thomas Crocrafi</i>	

London, Printed for *Fr. Green*, and are to be sold at  
the *Royal-Exchange*, *Westminster-Hall*, and  
*Fleetstreet*, 1662.

A STRANGE AND TRUE RELATION.  
Fac Simile of Title Page of Original Pamphlet, in the  
possession of Lord Esmé Stuart Gordon.



## Chapter II.

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### MR. LEECH, OF RAVELEY, CARRIED AWAY BY THE DEVIL.

An old tractate published in 1662 gives an account, attested by "six of the sufficientest men of the town," of an astonishing incident which occurred to a Raveley man. It appears that Mr. John Leech was a farmer living at Raveley, and he was desirous of visiting Whittlesea fair, but before doing so he called a neighbour into an inn—situated some two miles away from his own home—for the purpose of drinking "his morninges draught." He was at the time "almost drunk," and his object in visiting Whittlesea was to "drink there with some of his friends." Whilst the two were enjoying the "mornings draught," Mr. Leech "began to be very merry," and seeing his friend wished to go, he exclaimed, "Let

the Devil take him who goeth out of this house to-day." But in his merriment he forgot his rash observation, and shortly afterwards calling for his horse, set out for the fair. He had not travelled far upon his journey when he remembered what he had said, "his conscience being sore troubled at that damnable oath which he had took." Not knowing what to do, he rode about first one way and then another, until darkness set in. When about two o'clock in the night, "he spied two grim creatures before him in the likeness of griffins." These were the Devil's messengers, who had been sent to take him at his word, and take him they did, according to the testimony of the "six sufficientest men of the town." They roughly handled him, took him up in the air, stripped him, and then dropped him, "a sad spectacle all bloody and goared," in a farm yard just outside the town of Doddington. Here he was discovered, lying upon some harrows, in the condition described. He was picked up and carried into a gentleman's house, where, being well nursed, he described the remarkable adventures which had befallen him. But before long he "grew into a frenzy so desperate that they were afraid to stay in his chamber," and the gentleman of the house not knowing what else to do, sent for "the parson of the town." It is natural to suppose that the Devil and Parsons are not good company, and

prompted, as we are led to suppose, by the satanic influence which still held him, the man rushed at the minister, and attacked him with so much fury, that it was "like to have cost him his life." But the noise being heard below, the servants rushed up, rescued the parson, and tied the "faithless man" down in his bed and left him. The next morning, hearing nothing, they thought he was asleep, but upon entering his room he was discovered with "his neck broke, his tongue out of his mouth, and his body as black as a shoo, all swelled, and every bone in his body out of joint."

The following is an exact copy of the account, the curious expressions, spelling, and punctuation being faithfully followed :—

A  
STRANGE  
AND  
TRUE RELATION  
Of One  
M r . J O H N L E E C H ;

---

Who  
Lived in Huntington-Shire,  
at a place called *Ravely*, not farre distant from *Huntington Town*, who was  
(about ten dayes agoe) carried twelve



no) into the house, they being thus both together, he (almost drunk) began to be very merry, at last his friend asked the people of the House what it was a clock, they said it was almost eleven, Mr Leech replied, then let the Devil take him who goeth out of this House to day, they had not sat much longer, but he was of another mind, and said he must needs go to the Fair, which was kept at a place called *Wit-telsea*, says his friend to him, you do not remember the oath you made just now ; ha, ha, ha, saith he, I'le warrant you the Devil will not trouble, besides I am so heavy, he will not be able to carry me halfe way to the Fair, but he will be able to carry you to your journeys end somewhere else, replied his friend, I'le venter him, said Mr *Leech*, and so called for his Horse and took his leave of his friend, and rod towards the Fair, he had not got above two miles from the House, where he was a drinking, but then he began to consider of his unlawfull Oath which he had broken, so that he was extreamley troubled in his conscience, that he did think to turn homewards, thus he rod up and down all the day, not knowing what he did, his conscience being so sorely troubled at that damnable Oath which he had took, and afterwards so simply broken ; he not knowing whereabouts he was, it being almost dark night, did wander backwards and forwards halfe the night, in amazement ; at last about one or

two o'clock he espied two grim Creatures before him, in the likeness of Griffins, which did terrifie him very much, then presently he heard a terrible voice, which said three times, remember thy sins and the Oath thou hast broken this day, at which sound, he fell from his Horse to the ground, as it were in a trance, but presently felt himself very roughly handled, between the two Finnes, who did hurry him in the Aire above 12 miles from that place, over a great water called *Wittelsea* meare, and *Ramsey* meare to a town called *Dunington*, and there draped in the Patrons Yard, without either cloathes or sence, the next morning the servants going to make their Plows and harrows fit for work, beheld that sad spectacle all bloody and goared with the Harrows (they thought) and being very much astonished at it, demanded how he came there, what he was, and where he lived ; he not being able to answer them with anything but sighs and groanes, the Servants very much grieved at the poor Mans condition, ran in and acquainted their Master with the passage, he seeing, with great admiration, this sad spectacle, immediately caused a Bed to be made, and he to be laid in it, and to be covered very warm, which accordingly was done, he being thus refreshed began to recover his senses and there told them the whole story, who he was, where he lived, whither he was agoing, and how he came there, and

likewise desired that he might have the liberty to repose himself another day or two there, which was granted by the good gentleman; In the meantime some of the Servants of the House, going about some business near two miles off from that place, by chance found some cloathes all torne, which they brought home, supposing to be his, which being showed to him he owned, still continuing there, at last he grew into a Frenzy so desperate, that they were afraid to stay in his Chamber, the Gentleman of the House asked him if he should send for the Minister to pray by him, to which he made a very desperate answer and said I am past his recovery, the Gentleman very much troubled at his answer, sent privately to the Parson of the Town, and desired him to come to him presently, the Minister making what hast he could possible, came to the Gentlemans house, who up and told him this sad accident, the Minister hearing this, desired that he might be suffered to go up to him alone, and he would see what he could do towards the recovery of his soul, which he feared at that time was in very great danger, the Minister had no sooner entered into his Chamber, but he immediately rose out of his Bed and ran to him and violently threw him on the ground, (which had like to have cost the Ministers life) saying what camest thou hither for, the Minister answered, (as well as he could,) to comfort

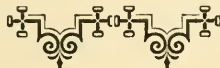
the faithless man, the noise being heard down stairs, they were afraid he had mischieved the Minister, which had proved true, had they not came up as they did, for they found him beating the Parson with all the might he had, they seeing that, presently got hold of both his arms, and bound them, and laid him in his bed ; he seeing himselfe bound, made a terrible noise, and at last broke them and got loose, they seeing that, were afraid of him, and locked the door, not daring any more to go into his Chamber that day nor night, the next morning they went to the door to listen if they could hear him stir, but not hearing him make any noise, supposed him to be asleep, opened the door when they beheld him upon the bed with his neck broke, his tongue out of his mouth, and his body as black as a shoo, all swelled, and every bone in his body out of joint ; this sad spectacle being seen by most of the people of the Town, was buryed being it could no longer be kept, the stanch was so great ; the sufficientest men of the Town who saw this sad sight have hereunto set their hands, *John Webber*, Gentleman. *Jeffery Hobkins*, Gentleman. *Robert Shipton*, Gentleman. *Francis Hall*, Yeoman. *James Smith*, Yeoman. *Thomas Cracroft*, Yeoman."

Such is the story as it is handed down to us through two centuries, but a little critical observation seems to rob it of its supernatural and weirdly character. Not



only is there a confusion in the places, but the details are not satisfactory. For instance he is said to have been carried across "Wittelsea Meare and Ramsey Meare," which would have been a very round about way indeed, either from Raveley or Whittlesey, to Doddington, and would have necessarily made the distance considerably more than "12 miles." A course of 12 miles from Doddington over the two meres, would have made him start somewhere about Yaxley. The fact, too, that he was discovered amongst the harrows sufficiently explains the "goaring."

Considering the admissions that he was "almost drunk" when he went for his morning's draught, and that at eleven o'clock "he began to be very merry," and knowing, as we do, the good understanding that exists between the individual who exercises authority in the regions below and gentlemen suffering from *delirium tremens*, the reader will have little difficulty in deciding what was the real nature of Mr. Leech's adventure.



## Chapter II.

---

### STORIES OF THE NORMAN CROSS PRISONERS.

The barracks at Norman Cross for prisoners of war were erected in 1796, the spot being near to the site of the old toll-bar. They occupied two-thirds of a square, one side facing the great north road, the other facing a division of the road leading to Peterborough. The barracks and necessary appendages covered about 40 acres of ground, and were capable of holding 6,000 soldiers. More than 500 carpenters and labourers were employed in their erection, and so urgent was it considered that the work should be pushed forward, that all who refused to work on Sundays were discharged. The French prisoners were marched into the barracks in detachments; occasionally they were brought up the Nene from Lynn in barges

and landed at Peterborough quay, and then marched to the barracks.

Great inconvenience having been felt in the summer of 1797, in consequence of the large numbers of people who from places in the neighbourhood of the prison resorted there to visit the prisoners, thereby rendering it extremely difficult to observe a proper degree of control and vigilance over the prisoners (whose number and description demanded the greatest precautions), it became absolutely necessary to issue positive orders preventing persons from being admitted unless actually accompanied by a commissioned officer.

Two of the French prisoners escaped in June, 1797, but were re-taken at Wisbech, and were conveyed back to the prison "to more solitary and secure quarters."

An officer succeeded in making good his escape in December of the same year.

One Sunday in February, 1798, as a soldier named Lowder, employed at the barracks, was amusing himself with shooting, as, it is said, "was his constant practice on Sunday," the breach pin of the gun flew out, and buried itself in his forehead, just above the nose. His eyes were nearly forced out. He died raving mad a few days after.

The deplorable condition of the French prisoners of war had, in 1800 and 1801, begun to attract considerable attention, and the Government published

a long correspondence on the subject, from which it appeared that the French Consul refused to supply the French prisoners with clothes, although the British Government had paid for the clothing of the English prisoners in France. The report in the correspondence says: "These unfortunate French prisoners have such a propensity for gaming with one another, that, (notwithstanding every precaution is used to prevent it), many of them sell their clothes, bedding, and even their victuals before it is due, to raise a trifle to gamble with. From all that we (Dr. Johnson and Mr. Serle) know and see, we have no hesitation to conclude that the proportion of food allowed is fully sufficient for life and health, if properly received, and not shamefully lost by gaming or otherwise. Destitute in many instances of the necessary warmth of covering, no diet whatever can preserve health, and therefore in order to restore it we have directed, in company with the instructions of the Lords of the Admiralty, that the naked should be clothed without waiting longer, and probably in vain, for the exercise of French humanity."

In April, 1801, seven of the prisoners succeeded in making their escape, three of them were officers of privateers, who were re-captured at Boston by the particular exertions of the magistrates there, and were escorted back by the Spalding cavalry. Three

of the others got a fishing boat, which they stole from the Freestone shore, though closely pursued, and succeeded in getting out to sea. They were, however, re-captured on the Norfolk coast by a custom house cutter. A complete chart of the Lincolnshire coast was found in the hat of one of them ; with particular remarks on it, which was at once forwarded to the Secretary of State.

A very extraordinary circumstance occurred in May, 1804. Two of the French prisoners contrived to make their escape. On clearing the precincts of the barracks, they pursued different routes, and one of them was fortunate to get clear away. The other, quitting the public road, had pursued his course a few miles when he met with a most singular obstruction. In crossing a stile he was beset by a shepherd's dog "of the ordinary, and true English breed," which absolutely opposed the progress of the poor Frenchman. Neither enticement nor resistance availed, the dog repeatedly fastened on the legs and heels of the fugitive, and held him at bay until the continued noise of the quarrel brought some persons to the spot, and ultimately led to the detection of the prisoner and his re-incarceration in the prison at Norman Cross.

In July, 1804, it was stated that the number of prisoners in the barracks was 1,600, among whom were part of Bonaparte's boasted "Army of England,"

An alarming spirit of insubordination manifested itself in October, 1804, amongst the prisoners, then about 3,000 in number. An intolerable and incessant uproar was kept up all the morning, and at noon their intention to attempt the destruction of the barriers of their position became so obvious, that the commanding officer of the barracks, apprehensive that the force under his command, consisting only of the Shropshire militia and one battalion of the army reserve, would not be sufficient, in case of extremity, to environ and restrain so large a body of prisoners, despatched a messenger requiring the assistance of the volunteer force at Peterborough. Fortunately the yeomanry had had a field day, and one of the troops was undismitted when the messenger arrived. With the most commendable alacrity the officers and men immediately galloped to the barracks. In the evening, the tumult still continuing amongst the prisoners, and some of them taking advantage of the extreme darkness to attempt an escape, it was found necessary to require the further reinforcement of the infantry corps at Peterborough, and of the two other troops of yeomanry. At nine o'clock the alarm was given in the city, and the infantry in a few minutes were equipped for duty, and marched with the yeomanry to Norman Cross, where they continued on duty all night. The prisoners having cut down a

part of the wood enclosure during the night, nine of them escaped. In another part of the prison, as soon as daylight broke, it was discovered they had undermined a distance of 34 feet towards the great north road, under the fosse which surrounded the prison, although it was four feet deep, and it was not discovered that they had any tools. They had not, however, carried the mine a sufficient extent for it to answer their purpose. Five of them who escaped were re-taken in the course of a few days, but the others got clear away.

About a month after the above incident, another attempt was made to escape. Sixteen of the prisoners had broken out of their cells, and were found by the guard skulking together in a corner of the outer prison. None of these however escaped. Whether it was this same sixteen, or another party of the same number does not appear, but in the following month, Nov., 1804, sixteen of the prisoners matured their plans and accomplished their purpose. Information was sent that some of them had made their way to Stamford, and, although it was the day of the Bull Running there, every man in the Volunteer Corps obeyed the summons, and with assistance from Peterborough scoured the whole country. No Frenchmen, however, were discovered. Later, five of them were re-taken in another direction.

Not being able to effect their escape, some of the prisoners had recourse to forgery, and in Dec., 1804, an engraved plate for printing one pound notes was discovered. The plate was exceedingly well done, and all the implements for engraving and printing were at once seized. In 1811 another prisoner escaped, and he tells his own story in the following words :—

“After waiting day after day, and week after week, with emotious and impatience indescribable, the moment of liberation at length arrived, in a dark and dismal night in the month of February. The rain had poured down in torrents all the day, accompanied with a heavy fall of snow, and the wind blew a most violent storm. Nothing could better answer my purpose ; as in darkness lay the only chance I could possibly have of eluding the keen and vigilant eyes of my over-watchful guards. Being now determined to make the attempt, I took from their places of concealment, where I had arranged all necessary for the occasion, a strong knife to cut the wood paling, and a rope which I had made out of wool, with a hook at the end, to surmount the wall. I also put a biscuit or two in my pocket, with a shirt and a pair of stockings, (which last I found exceedingly comfortable and refreshing to me), to put on dry when the others were wet and dirty. I had no room for anything else ; in short, what I had, filled my



pockets, as my dress was only a sailor's jacket and trousers, both of coarse blue cloth, but sound and warm. I had also a good strong pair of shoes on—another great comfort, and which ought always to be particularly attended to by every adventurous wanderer. My fellow-prisoner, of whom I bought a map, was the only one I acquainted with my purpose; not that he might accompany me, for he had given up all thoughts of escape himself, but that he might answer to my name if called over, which sometimes was the case, or otherwise assist me as far as lay in his power, without rendering himself liable to suspicion. It was a regular custom in the prison to count us out of our lodging-places in the morning and in again at night, so that if any were missing, it was immediately discovered, and the alarm given. This rendered it necessary that the first attempt should be made from within after we were shut up. As soon, therefore, as it was dark, I began my operations, my friend standing before me as I lay on the ground, and screening me from observation as well as he could by several artful manœuvres, which were much assisted by a long bench and table near us, on which he was apparently very deeply engaged at work. My object was to cut out one of the boards from the bottom of the building, which I had previously prepared for removal. In this I succeeded better than I

could possibly have expected ; and creeping out on my hands and knees, silently replaced the board, and, unperceived by any one, concealed myself among a heap of fagots in the yard, which had been brought there during the day, for firing. The rain and wind seemed if possible, to increase as the night approached, and soon shrouded all around me in pitchy darkness. There were here and there at long intervals, and at a great distance from me, regular rows of lamps ; but they only served to make the outer darkness more intense. As I crouched up in my hiding place, wet and almost benumbed with cold, which nothing but the hope of ultimate escape could have enabled me to bear, I could occasionally hear the clang of arms of the sentinels at their posts, notwithstanding the pattering of the rain and the howling of the wind, which had now increased to a perfect hurricane, nay, I could now and then even distinguish their voices. Their proximity did not at all tend to the encouragement, or the exhilaration of my spirits, but I was gone too far to recede. I continued in this horrid state of suspense till the clock struck eleven, which I had chosen as the most favourable point of time, the sentinels being then, as I thought, more likely to be tired, and not so much on their guard, being changed at nine and twelve. Commending my soul to God and our Holy Mother, I left my hiding place, but was

at first so stiff and cramped with being confined so long in one posture, that I could scarcely stand; however, this soon went off, and I found my courage rise as my blood circulated more freely. The wood paling could scarcely be called an impediment; and listening attentively for a moment, and hearing nothing to alarm me, I silently cut a part out, and crept through on my hands and knees as far and as quick as I could. I was interrupted by no one, and the sentinels were undoubtedly sheltered in their boxes. My success, so far, inspired me with great confidence. I knew that I had passed the first line of the guards, and that there were no more obstacles on one side of the wall. If anything, at this moment the hurricane blew with ten-fold violence, and justly thinking no soldier would face it, but seek shelter, I jerked the hook, with the line attached, on the top of the wall, which, fortunately for me, caught the first time, and with but little noise to alarm. However, I listened for a moment, in great agitation, but all appeared quiet. I then tried the rope with all my strength, and, it proving safe, I made the desperate venture—and desperate indeed it was, but what will not a man attempt for his liberty? Well, to proceed—with great difficulty I got to the top, and gently, and by degrees, I peeped my head over. I listened most attentively, you may be sure, but could hear nothing, and had

just got my knee upon the wall in the attitude of ascent, when a door opened close by me, and a soldier passed along. In a moment I threw myself flat on my face upon the wall, and very plainly heard the footsteps directly beneath me. I continued in this posture for some minutes, and had almost given myself up to despair, when, after passing and repassing several times, for I could hear him though not see him, he again retired to his box, and I heard the door close after him. I seized the favourable moment, and, pulling up the rope, descended in safety on the other side. I then took off my shoes, and softly walked on tiptoe across the beat of the sentinel, till I got to some distance, when I threw myself on the wet grass and stopped to take breath. My greatest difficulties were now surmounted; but as no time was to be lost, I soon started off again, and had nearly approached some of the lamps, which I was obliged to pass, when I plainly saw a picquet or patrol of five or six men across my very path. It was astonishing they did not see me; but my good star predominated, and I remained unnoticed. The lamps were now indeed in my favour, as they shewed me what to avoid, whilst I myself was shrouded in darkness. Choosing the most obscure places, and proceeding step by step, with the utmost precaution, I at last reached, unmolested, the boundary ditch, which

I soon cleared ; and in a moment after found myself out of the prison, and on a high road, with nothing farther to obstruct my progress.”

As a sentinel belonging to the picquet-guard was at his post, at one of the inner gates, one night in January, 1812, a French prisoner asked leave to go through. On being questioned as to his business, he said he was going for a bucket of water, on which the soldier observed that he already had one. But scarcely were the words pronounced when the prisoner threw the contents of the bucket in the sentinel's face, and the sudden application of the water had such an effect upon him that he dropped his firelock. This was taken advantage of by the Frenchman, who unfixed the bayonet and ran off with it. The soldier, however, quickly recovered “his recollection,” and having snatched up the piece, he discharged it at the prisoner. The ball entered below the shoulder and came out at the breast. The poor man lingered for a few days and then died. The soldier was indicted at the following Huntingdon assizes for manslaughter, but acquitted.

In August, 1813, five French prisoners who had escaped from Norman Cross were re-taken by some farmer's servants in Hampshire on their way to the coast in order to get to France.

When the peace was proclaimed in 1814, the joy

amongst the prisoners was of an extravagant description. A large white flag was set up in each of the quadrangles of the Depôt, under which the thousands of poor fellows who had been for years in confinement—through the cruel ambition of Bonaparte—danced, sung, laughed, and cried for joy. The garrison of the Depôt caught the infection of wild joy, and a party of them seized the Glasgow mail coach on its arrival at Stilton, and drew it to Norman Cross, whither the horses, coachman, and guard were obliged to follow. The prisoners were so elated at the prospect of being liberated that they ceased to perform any work. They were all bent on selling their stock, which they did at 50 per cent. advanced price. Many of them had realized fortunes of from £500 to £1000 each in Bank of England notes. By June, 1814, all the prisoners had left, and the following September the ammunition stored there was removed. Two years afterwards—in June, 1816—the building was pulled down, and the materials sold by auction.



## Chapter III.

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### THE "STOLEN" HEIR OF SPALDWICK.

Passing along the Thrapston road from Huntingdon, by Hinchbrook Park and the meandering Alconbury Brook, through the villages of Brampton and Ellington, the stately spire of Spaldwick Church may be seen rising above the verdant foliage which graces the green slopes of this portion of the county. At the latter end of the last century there lived in the village of Spaldwick Mr. Thomas Day, the lord of about 1,000 of these broad and fertile acres, which he had inherited from his father, and which, provided he had children, were to go to his heir. In the event, however, of there being no children, then his brother, Mr. John Day, and his heirs were to take the property.

Mr. Thomas Day possessed more than a fair share of this world's goods. He was young, rich, and handsome. But still he was not happy. There was something more than mere wealth and its accessories which were necessary to make the cup of earthly happiness full. He was a bachelor, and he desired a wife. It would have been thought that such an eligible match would not have long gone begging, but the Huntingdonshire young ladies failed to captivate his heart. There were many reasons alleged for this, but when in the year 1775 he led to the altar of Spaldwick Church, a young damsel, who, up to that time had been engaged as housemaid in his own establishment, the secret was out. There are several descriptions given of this young lady's personal appearance. None of them, however, are very definite. Mr. Thos. Brindley, of Leigh, Staffordshire, described her in the "Day" trial as a "very thin woman." A witness named Hart described her as follows :—

"What sort of woman was Mrs. Day?"

"A genteelish sort of woman."

"Tall or short?"

"Middling way."

"Fat or lean, was she?"

"Rather thinnish."

Another witness described her as wearing, "a light coloured riding dress, with a black hat and feather,"



and again as having on "a jean dress, a black hat, and a large bunch of ribbons." Mrs. Osborne gave the following very clear and definite description of Mrs. Day:—

"She was not very fat, was she?"

"She was rather jolly."

"She had black eyes?"

"Yes, she had."

"And a fair complexion?"

"Yes."

"I suppose her black eyes were more remarkable from the extreme fairness of her complexion?"

"She was not over fair, but she was not a Mulatto, sir."

"When you say, then, that a woman is not over fair, you mean she was one dip removed from a Mulatto?"

"She was not a black."

"That was what you meant when you said she was a fair woman?"

"I said first she was not over dark."

"You mean to say she was not over dark?"

"She might be as fair as myself, perhaps, I don't think she was quite so fair."

This was the lady who succeeded in captivating the heart of Mr. Day, but like many similar unions it did not turn out altogether happily. The lady had an

unmanageable temper, and at length the husband and wife agreed to part. The wife, whose maiden name had been Lakin, and whose father was a carpenter at Leigh, in Staffordshire, returning home. Her character is thus painted by her own husband. "She was a very bad woman, indeed, she had robbed and pilfered him strangely; she once attempted to burn his house, and afterwards jumped out of the window and cried murder." A lady with such strongly marked traits in her character was certainly not the gentle and affectionate wife which Mr. Thomas Day had yearned for in his bachelor days, and he therefore arranged to allow her £30 a year for life to live away from him.

But before leaving Spaldwick Mrs. Day had either actually done that—or seriously false allegations were made against her—which involved the Day family for two succeeding generations in very costly law suits. The allegations made against her were to the effect, that having no children by her marriage she had purchased an infant from a woman in Staffordshire, and introduced it into the family as her son, in order to prevent the estates from descending to Mr. John Day after her husband's death, "a thing," so says Mr. John Day's son, "which some have suspected her husband to have connived at, he being at the time on very unfriendly terms with his brother John."

At all events the child in question grew up, and at

the death of Mr. Thomas Day, succeeded to the broad pastures of Spaldwick, by will, being called by the testator his "son."

There being grave doubts as to the legitimate title of this gentleman to the estate, the brother, John Day, instituted a suit of ejectment for the recovery of the estate, and the cause came on for trial at Huntingdon, at the summer assizes of 1784, before Lord Loughborough, Chief Justice of the common Pleas. At this trial evidence was given by witnesses on the part of the plaintiff to the effect, that Mrs. Day left Spaldwick on the 22nd November, 1784, to see her parents at Leigh, in Staffordshire, and that while there she gave it out that she had been confined of a son and heir, returning in three months' time to her husband's residence at Spaldwick with an infant, which several witnesses on the other side swore to as "very much resembling Mr. Thomas Day." The woman was produced from whom the child in question was said to have been procured. On the part of the defendant it was contended that Mr. Thomas Day had always recognised the defendant as his son, and had left the property to him, and that there was a strong family likeness. The witnesses examined for the plaintiff were as follows: William Crowger, of Kimbolton; Sarah Lakin, of Ashby-de-la-Zouch; Thomas Brindley and his wife, Sarah Johnson, Ann

Obell, Jane Turner, Mary Blood, Elizabeth Lakin, William Rawlings, all of Leigh ; Mr. Francis Woolley, of Lichfield ; Mrs. Ann Harris, of Atherston ; Richard Leigh, of Atherston ; G. Roberts, of Kettering ; Thos. Thomas, of Kimbolton ; Mary Richardson and R. B. Bourne, of Hints. The defendant's witnesses were : Mary How, of Spaldwick ; Mary Read, of Stowe, in Huntingdonshire ; Mary Cook, of Kimbolton ; Elizabeth Luccock, of Kimbolton ; Eleanor Johnson, of Kimbolton ; Ann Medlow, of Swineshead, Huntingdonshire ; Thomas Peck, surgeon, Kimbolton ; Hannah Statham, of Leigh ; Elizabeth Rutter, of Leigh ; Elizabeth Cornes, Leigh ; Mrs. Day herself, who declared the defendant to be her son ; Mary Sharman, of Wornditch ; Charles Forster, of Spaldwick ; Mrs. Beaumont, of Biggleswade ; and Ann Smith, of Spaldwick. There were thus 34 witnesses examined, 19 for the plaintiff and 15 for the defendant. The verdict was in favour of the defendant, who was thus left in possession of his estate.

But it was not for long, for in the beginning of the year 1785, two of the principal witnesses at the trial, Elizabeth Cornes and Elizabeth Rutter, stung, as they alleged themselves to be, "with remorse of conscience," and "probably with disappointment also of the reward expected from Mrs. Day," went to Mr. Horwood, the steward of the Marquis of Stafford,

and told him that what they had sworn to at the trial was false, that they had never been happy since, and that they were desirous of doing everything in their power to set the matter right. "They did not know where the child in question was obtained, but a woman named Harris, of Bloxwich, whom Mrs. Day had also taken with them to the trial to corroborate their testimony, could inform him. They added that this woman, Harris, when she was at Huntingdon, refused to give her evidence, and told Mrs. Day that if she caused her to be examined in court, she would inform the court where the child came from, and whose it really was; and that in consequence of this declaration and her persisting in it, she (Mrs. Harris) was locked up in a room at the Crown Inn, in Huntingdon, till the trial was over, and until she had quitted the town." The two women made affidavits to this effect in February, 1785.

In consequence of this, Mrs. Harris was searched out, and stated that "after a child which Mrs. Day had procured at Wolverhampton and brought to her house was taken away by a magistrate's warrant, her husband procured a child from one Ann Stokes, of Birmingham," and with this new evidence Mr. John Day was advised to take out a new ejectment summons, "but this was found impracticable on account of the heavy costs, which he had already paid, having reduced

his property so much that he was not able to support the expense of another trial." Two years later, in 1787, he was under the necessity of making an assignment and conveyance to trustees of all his estates and effects for the benefit of his creditors and the future support of his family, and his property had to be sold for that purpose. But ten years after obtaining this new information, Mr. John Day died, and his eldest son, in the year 1796, "being in a position to risk the expense of a second trial," took out another ejectment summons, which came on for trial at Huntingdon at the summer assizes of 1797, before Mr. Justice Heath.

The defendant, Mr. Thomas Day, was a popular man; even the counsel for the plaintiff bore this testimony to his character. He said the Jury must "discharge all personal consideration, and do justice with an impartial spirit, giving the defendant in the outset all the benefit of his presumptive right, all the advantage of the length of his possession, of the reputation of his legitimacy, of his fair and honest character, and of the due weight of the former verdict." And again: "The defendant, notwithstanding the suspicions which from the beginning obscured and questioned his birth, was nevertheless acknowledged by his family, and has arrived at man's estate with the feelings of a gentleman. I learn indeed that his

conduct and character are every way worthy of a genuine descent. I hear the best report of him from all quarters.”

The knowledge that an attempt was being made to eject him from the estate created a popular demonstration on his behalf. The plaintiff in the second action thus writes: “So unpopular indeed was the cause which I had undertaken, and so strong was the public mind against me, that the town of Huntingdon, during the trial, more resembled the scene of a contested election, than an assize town during the solemn administration of Justice. I was obliged to apply to the Mayor of the town to order out his constables to keep the peace, and enable me to bring my witnesses into court.”

There was again at this trial a mass of evidence taken on both sides, and the verdict of the court was again in favour of the man who was alleged to have been “stolen.”

Finally, however, the parties to the action settled the dispute by a compromise, the terms of which are thus described—not impartially—by the plaintiff: “The defendant dared not appeal to a third jury, and he dared not take the costs of the last trial, although he was told by his agents, Messrs. Kinderley and Long, that an order of the plaintiff’s upon a banker lay at his agent’s ready for him, but he was at the same time

told that another ejectment was intended ; therefore, rather than trust to another jury, he proposed (four years afterwards) to release one hundred acres of land in the Manor of Kimbolton, which he claimed as part of the estate in question, and to which he was as much entitled, and I was urged and prevailed upon by my brother, Mr. Wm. Day of St. Neots, (though most reluctantly, and which I have ever since repented), to accept of a compromise by giving up my claim to the estate at Spaldwick, and so put an end to further litigation."

What became of the dark-eyed Mrs. Day? After her separation from her husband, she removed with her father's family to Trentham, in Staffordshire, where she continued to reside until after her husband's death, when she married Joseph Slater, a tanner, of Stafford. But this marriage was apparently as unfortunate as her first, for two years later she separated from Mr. Slater and went to live at Stone, where she continued until her death, which was occasioned by her taking poison in the year 1793.

The defendant in the action, the alleged "stolen" heir, lived to the age of 72, and died at his residence at Hartford, near Huntingdon, on the 13th of March, 1845.



## Chapter XV.

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### Y<sup>e</sup> BATTLE OF SAINTE NEEDES.

In 1648 St. Neots was the scene of a short but decisive battle between the Royalists and Round-heads. Earl Holland, after some apparent hesitation as to which side he should favour, finally threw in his fortunes with those of the king.

In 1648 he called upon all loyal citizens of London to rise with him in behalf of the King. But the citizens of London had recently suffered very considerably on behalf of the Apprentice Riots, and there was no general desire to risk a repetition of those scenes. About 500, however, responded to his call, among them being Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Peterborough, and others. The force marched to Kingston on Thames, where they had an engagement with the Round-heads. The engagement

was short, but Earl Holland's force was completely overpowered. The Earl's followers fled in various directions; he himself, with about a hundred horsemen, rode off in the direction of Northamptonshire, but finding themselves hotly pursued, turned aside and entered the town of St. Neots. During the march the Earl was joined by several Royalists, so that, on reaching St. Neots, Earl Holland found himself again at the head of a body of cavalry numbering about 300 or 400. With the troop was Colonel Dolbier, an old Dutch officer of experience and great bravery, who had formerly served the Round-heads, but who had now attached himself to the cause of the Royalists. They arrived in St. Neots on Sunday evening, July 9th, and the officers held a council of war as to what should be done. Some of the officers were for at once dispersing in different directions, others for continuing with all speed further north, but Dolbier advised that St. Neots was so situated, and their forces so strengthened, since the retreat from Kingston, that they could well meet their pursuers, and, by obtaining a victory, turn the fortunes of war in their favour. As he was the most experienced soldier amongst them, his advice was listened to with respect, and when he undertook to secure the party against a surprise that night, or meet the death of a soldier in the defence of

the town, it was finally decided to adopt that course.

Messengers were at once despatched to the magistrates in the town and neighbourhood, and also to the principal inhabitants of the town, who were informed of the decision which had been come to, but assuring them that their property, as far as the Royalists were concerned, should not be touched, but should be held sacred.

The Duke of Buckingham spoke as follows :—  
“Gentlemen, we come not hither to carry anything from you, but have given strict orders that neither officers nor soldiers carry what is now yours away. Nor are our intentions to make a new war, but to rescue the Kingdom from the arbitrary power of the committees of the several counties that labour to continue a bloody war to destroy you. Our resolution for peace is by a well-settled government under our Royal King Charles, and we do bless God that he hath made us instruments to serve the King, the Parliament, and the Kingdom in the way of peace.”  
Earl Holland and the Earl of Peterborough equally assured the inhabitants that every care should be taken to secure them and theirs against loss or violence, and they were faithful to their word.

Weary by their long and rapid march from Kingston the various officers eagerly sought rest, Colonel

Dolbier alone keeping watch. Quite early in the following morning, and some hours before day-break, the pursuers came up to St. Neots. Dolbier at once gave the alarm. He was immediately in his saddle, and his comrades were called by the general shout, "To horse!" The Duke of Buckingham was the only officer who had not slept at St. Neots. He had gone to spend the night with a Huntingdonshire gentleman, who lived two or three miles distant. A messenger, however, was despatched for him, and he galloped to the scene as fast as possible. According to the reports of the Puritans—which can seldom be relied upon—Earl Holland was in no hurry to put in an appearance.

The Parliament forces came to Eatonford a little before sunrise, probably about three o'clock in the morning, and before the Royalists were ready to receive them. Upon their attempting to pass over the Bridge the engagement was commenced. As only a very few Royalists had repaired to the scene, those who were defending the Bridge retreated before the superior numbers. This was disastrous for their cause, and also for the townspeople of St. Neots, for the engagement, instead of taking place on the outskirts of the town, was now fought out in the streets, to the alarm of the peacefully-disposed residents, who appear to have been absolutely neutral.

The Royalists were now all aroused, and the remainder of the Puritans entering the town, the engagement became hot. Amongst those who fell in an early stage was Dolbier. The best authenticated accounts speak of him as having died fighting bravely and even heroically, but others state that when the alarm of the approach of the Puritans was given, it was considered that Dolbier had acted treacherously, and had led them into a trap, and he was accordingly shot by one of the Royalists as he was charging the enemy. There is, however, no evidence of such a circumstance. Colonel Leg and Colonel Kenelm Digby were also killed, and about 14 other soldiers, some of these latter being drowned in the Ouse in trying to escape. On the Puritans' side the lieutenant-captain was shot dead, as were four other soldiers, and three privates were wounded.

The Earl of Holland, with a few who protected him, fought their way to the gates of the inn, when the Earl endeavoured to get inside with a view of escaping. But to his chagrin, he found the landlord had closed the gates as a measure of precaution. On it being announced who it was who sought admission, the landlord opened the gates, for the Earl had been his guest the previous night. As soon as he had passed through, however, they were again immediately closed. The Parliamentarians at once battered

the gates down, and, entering the inn, demanded admission into the Earl's room. On this being refused, the door was burst open, and the Earl faced them, sword in hand, exclaimed, "I pray you let me have quarter for my life. I am your prisoner, and desire that I may be civilly used, and that you will shew yourselves soldiers and gentlemen towards me. I offer no opposition, but surrender myself your prisoner." He was at once seized and taken to Colonel Scroop, who had him properly secured, and a guard placed over him. The other prisoners, about 120 in number—with that distinguished feature in the Puritan character of shewing the utmost disrespect to religious buildings—were lodged in the Parish Church. The following day they were sent on to Hitchin. The Earl of Holland was sent to Warwick Castle, where he was kept a prisoner for the six following months. The Duke of Buckingham escaped, riding as far as Huntingdon, where he was informed that a troop of Scroop's forces were in pursuit, he took to some bye ways, and returned to London. The Earl of Peterborough also escaped, and assuming the appearance of an ordinary country gentleman, was after a time recognised by a company of private soldiers and taken prisoner. But while they were conveying him to London some people *en route* succeeded in rescuing him from the guards.

At the expiration of six months, the Earl of Holland was removed to London, and on Feb. 27th, 1649, was brought to trial on a charge of high treason. He pleaded that his crime was not capital, and he urged that he had surrendered at St. Neots on condition that his life should be given him. On the 3rd of March he was condemned to death.

His brother, the Earl of Warwick, who had espoused the Puritan cause, petitioned the Parliament for the life of his brother. This petition was supported by the Countess of Warwick, and numerous other gentlemen and ladies of rank. But the Puritan Parliament was incapable of mercy; it divided on the question whether the life of the Earl should be spared, and an equal number voted each way. The Puritan speaker then had a golden opportunity of exercising mercy and clemency; but he gave his casting vote in favour of the death penalty. The execution had previously been ordered to take place on March 7th, but in consequence of the petition to Parliament it was deferred for two days.

After this sentence of death had been passed upon him, he spent the intervening time in a solemn preparation for death. He refused to see his wife and children, saying that it would "add too much to his sorrow, and discompose his thoughts, which were now only to be set on another world." They were times

of great religious excitement. The brutal laws, by which the English people were robbed of their old faith, were still in existence. Men were constantly being brought to the scaffold for their adherence to the old religion; and priests and laymen were frequently suffering martyrdom for their faith. The new religion had not been in existence a century. Many men, following the example of the founder of the English protestant church, dared not die outside the fold of the catholic church and without catholic sacraments. It is not, therefore, surprising that the Earl for several days after his sentence, was in great perturbation about obtaining pardon for his sins. He said he had no assurance of pardon for his sins, or of the love of God for him. The minister who attended him therefore had considerable difficulty in persuading him that God would have mercy upon him. He had not slept for several nights before the day of his execution. But the night preceding he slept soundly, so that when it was time to call him, the guards hesitated to do so. He walked to the scaffold unaided, and talked to the people for a time, urging that when he surrendered at St. Neots, it was upon the understanding that his life should be spared. Pointing to a soldier, who stood near, he said "This honest man took me prisoner; you little thought I should be brought to this when I delivered myself



to you, on conditions." He then walked to the other side of the scaffold and kneeled down to pray. Afterwards he took off his gown and doublet, having on underneath a white satin waistcoat, and he put on a white satin cap. He took his leave with much affection of his servants, and told the executioner he forgave him, and he might have what money was on his person, which was £10. He then laid his head on the block, said a prayer, and gave the signal for the executioner, by stretching out his hand. His head was severed from his body by one stroke of the axe.



## Chapter V.

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### STAGE COACHES AND HIGHWAYMEN.

The Great North Road runs through the county of Huntingdon, dividing it nearly in two. This was the chief highway of traffic between the North and South in the coaching days. It was studded with numerous posting houses, some of the principal and most famous being at Buckden, Alconbury, Stilton, Kate's Cabin, Wansford. It is only when we look back upon the coaching days of 50 years ago that we can realize the progress which has been made in the 19th century. Fifty years ago stage coaches and stage wagons were travelling on the Great North Road through Huntingdonshire. An account of them, written in 1833, says: \* "The height of the postilions

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\* "Great Britain in 1833, by Baron D'Haussez."

(always chosen from amongst the smallest of men), and their dress, consisting of a jacket, short breeches, and half boots, are calculated to reduce to the smallest compass the burden of the horses. Behind the coach the guard is seated, with a blunderbus and a pair of pistols before him. These coaches travel at the rate of 10 miles an hour, but their small size (for the English have little regard for their personal proportions in the sizes of their carriages), and the short time they stop to refresh, render them very unpleasant modes of conveyance. Stage coaches are very elegant carriages, built to carry 15 or 18 travellers, and a considerable weight in packets, and on admirable roads. Without it the height of the carriages, the arrangement of the whole of the luggage on the imperial, and the lightness of the body and the axle-tree, would give rise to frequent accidents. The appointments of an English coach are no less elegant than its form. A portly, good-looking coachman, seated on a very high coach-box, well dressed, wearing white gloves, a nosegay in his buttonhole, and his chin enveloped in an enormous cravat, drives four horses perfectly matched and harnessed, and as carefully groomed."

But there were coaches running on all the other roads in the county, to and from the various towns and neighbouring counties. An old coaching

list\* gives the following coaches as running through Huntingdonshire from Cambridge daily, in 1847, viz. :

1. *The Alexander*, for Leicester, from the Hoop Inn, by Huntingdon and Stamford.
2. *The Blucher*, for Huntingdon, from the Hoop Inn.
3. *The Oxford*, from the Eagle Inn, by St. Neots, Bedford, Leighton Buzzard and Aylesbury.
4. *The Eagle*, for Leamington and Birmingham, from the Eagle, by Bedford and Northampton to Weedon.
5. *The Rising Sun*, to Birmingham, from the Hoop Inn, by Huntingdon and Northampton to Weedon station.

Similar lists might be compiled from every other town of any size in the neighbouring counties.

The following circumstance serves to show the extent of the traffic on the North Road in Huntingdonshire. On Wednesday, Feb. 22nd, 1837, at a meeting of the commissioners of roads held at Stamford, the bar on the Wansford road was let for nine months to Mr. Wm. Headley, of Peterborough, for the sum of £1,043.

Stangate Hole, on the Great North Road, near

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\* Published in the *Antiquary*, March, 1887.

Alconbury Hill, was a favourite resort for "gentlemen of the road." It was the scene of an adventure related in *Drunken Barnaby's Journal*, and indeed, the late Rev. Henry Freeman, notwithstanding his extensive researches into the history of the county, was unable to discover any other mention of the locality. "Cuthbert Bede," (Rev. E. Bradley) in *Notes and Queries*, has however furnished additional information respecting the place. "An old man," he writes "who in his youth served as ostler at the Wheat Sheaf Inn, Alconbury Hill, tells me that 'some folks said as how the highwaymen once kept their horses in the cellars of that inn! but I don't reckon much of that myself and count it to be a tale. But it's true what I am going to tell you, sir, that there was an ostler at that inn as used to help to put in the coach horses and then nip across the fields and come round and meet the coach and rob the passengers, and if you believe me, his shiny barrell'd pistol was nothing more than an old tin candlestick. I mind the time when they lowered the hill and altered the hole, and when they dug down they found a sight of buns.' 'Buns!' I said. 'Yes, sir, buns.' 'What sort of buns?' I asked. 'Christian buns,' he replied, and while I was pondering over Good Friday buns, and the probable reason for burying them in that locality, not far from Sawtry abbey, the old man

dissipated this notion by saying 'they was supposed to be the buns of folks as had been murdered and buried there by the highwaymen!' So I was made aware that 'bones' in the Huntingdonshire vernacular are converted into 'buns.' "

On Monday, Dec. 10th, 1791, two post chaises—in which were Mr. A. Wilson, of Glasgow, and some friends—were stopped on the Great North Road, between Eaton and Buckden, about four o'clock in the afternoon, by two highwaymen well mounted and armed, with crape over their faces. From one lady was taken a purse which contained several pieces of gold coin, viz. : one of Mary Queen of Scots, 1753 ; one of Henry VIII. ; one of Ferdinand and Isabella, of Spain ; one of Laudeshulus, King of Norway ; and three smaller pieces ; a stamped Johannes, value £3 12s. ; and a Louis'd'Or ; also four gold rings in hair work.

On the 18th July, 1796, about 12 o'clock at night, Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, of Orton, were driving home, after having been at the Theatre at Peterborough, when they were set upon by two highwaymen, armed with bludgeons. One of the villains in trying to seize the horse's head was knocked down by the shaft of the carriage, and Mr. and Mrs. Roberts were thus preserved.

In December, 1796, the Stilton letter bag, with

several others, were stolen from the Mail Coach. A reward of £50 was offered.

One morning in August, in 1797, one of the large springs upon which the mail box rests, belonging to the York Mail Coach, snapped in pieces, about a mile from Wansford. The passengers were immediately got out ; but while they were assisting the guard and coachman to chain up the body of the coach, the horses took fright, and ran off full gallop with the coach for above a mile, and passed over a narrow bridge before they were stopped, which was effected by the coachman at the risk of his life ; for as soon as the horses set off, he caught hold of the hind part of the carriage and raised himself to the guard's seat, to which he clung, till after they had crossed the bridge, and were ascending a little hill, when he crawled over the coach to the box, and from thence down upon the pole, where, getting hold of the reins, he fortunately stopped their further progress, else in all probability both coach and horses would have been dashed to pieces.

In 1798, on the Yarmouth Coach arriving at Huntingdon, it was found that the mail bag was missing. Suspicion fell upon Stephen Gosling, the guard of the Glasgow mail, and he was committed to prison.

In December, 1811, the Cambridge Coach, while

passing over the bridge between Huntingdon and Godmanchester, was set upon by highwaymen and robbed.

On 21st Feb., 1812, in the evening, a young woman of the name of Finch was "waylaid and stopt" by a single robber, on Houghton Hill, near St. Ives, who, after cutting her pockets, in which were notes and silver to the amount of £37 from her side, allowed her to proceed without further molestation. She had been imprudent enough to mention, earlier in the evening, previously to leaving St. Ives, that she was afraid to go home alone because she had property upon her to a considerable amount.

In March, 1812, Sergeant Ives, of the West Essex militia, was stopped on the highway between Stilton and Norman Cross by a number of fellows, who, after having knocked him down and robbed him of his money and watch, wrenched open his jaws, and with savage cruelty cut off a piece of his tongue. It was said that the Sergeant had been active in suppressing the plat trade at Norman Cross barracks, revenge, therefore, in all probability instigated the ruffians to this atrocious act.

In May, 1813, Mrs. Northem, of Bicker, in the county of Huntingdon, was riding in the Peterborough stage waggon, which, whilst passing over Tempsford bridge, was met by a post chaise. The waggoner, who



was in his proper place, called to the driver of the chaise desiring him to stop, but he being asleep, his horses kept on, and forced those of the waggon so close to the side of the bridge as to overturn it. There was besides the deceased, a woman and a boy in the waggon, neither of whom received any serious injury; but upon searching for Mrs. Northem, immediately after the accident, it was discovered that a cask of liquor had rolled upon her, and she was found dead with the cask lying on her chest.

In November, 1813, as Mr. William Clifton was returning home from St. Ives market, he was stopped on his way by two highwaymen, who demanded his money. While he was resisting one of them the other took his pocket book from him, but in the confusion it came untied, and two £5 notes fell on the ground unperceived by the robbers, who escaped with a booty of £22.

On Sept. 14th, 1814, the new Boston Coach was overturned whilst going down Stukeley Hill, near Huntingdon, by which the guard was seriously injured. The morning previously the old Boston Coach was upset at Glatonbury Hill, about four miles from Huntingdon, by which one passenger had his arm fractured, and three ladies were very much burned by the lamps being forced in; the coach was "dashed to pieces." The same morning the York

Mail, near Huntingdon, had a narrow escape, the coachman being thrown from the box, and the coach travelled five miles without a driver.

On July 17th, 1815, the Rising Sun Coach was twice overturned, once in the streets of Huntingdon, and again not far from Northampton, where one of the passengers had his leg fractured, and two others received slight injuries ; both accidents happened in consequence of a wheel coming off.

On May 16th, 1816, William Nelson, the driver of Deacon's Wakefield and London Waggon met his death under the following circumstances:—As the waggon was going southwardly on the road near to Matcham's Gibbet at Alconbury, it was met upon the bridge there by the Boston coach, at which the waggon horses took fright, and drawing the waggon close to the railing of the bridge, crushed the driver between the shafts and the railing, and terribly injured him. Another coach coming up, would have taken him in, but at his own desire he was put into the waggon and taken to Mrs. Travel's, at the Brampton Hut public-house, in order to "his having immediate surgical aid." Mrs. Travel, however, with great inhumanity, refused to take the sufferer in, and on his being taken forward towards Buckden, he died in the waggon before it reached that place. The poor man earnestly entreated to be taken in at

Brampton Hut, and the passengers of the York Nelson coach also besought Mrs. Travel to take pity on the man. A pony was attached to the waggon, and surgical aid could have been brought to Brampton Hut in half an hour, and the death of the young man, only 31 years of age, possibly prevented. At the ensuing Quarter Sessions for the county of Huntingdon Mrs. Travel was arraigned, at the instigation of the owner of the stage waggon, for a misdemeanor. Counsel pleaded several circumstances in mitigation of the landlady's conduct, and finally the matter was settled by Mrs. Travel paying £25 to the family of the deceased.

On 2nd March, 1817, the Rockingham Coach was upset while going down the hill near Kate's Cabin, by which several passengers were seriously hurt. - The accident was occasioned by the very high wind, which at the instant prevented the coachman reining his horses to avoid a quantity of stones that had been laid to repair the road.

On 6th Aug., 1817, about 12 o'clock at night, Mr. Lang, an excise officer, stationed at Fenstanton, was going from Godmanchester to that place, riding on a donkey, when he was passed on the road by two fellows, who soon turning round, aimed several blows at him with bludgeons, which he parried. They then pulled him off the donkey's back, and one of the

villains kneeling on him, "ripped" open his waistcoat, and robbed him of £7 and a silver watch; the other meanwhile stood by, holding his bludgeon over Mr. Lang's head. A man of questionable character, of the name of Hart, was next day taken up on suspicion, but Mr. Lang declining to swear to his being one of the robbers, he was set at liberty.

On Aug. 17th, 1818, the Glasgow Mail was overturned about four miles from St. Neots. None of the passengers were hurt, but the guard was so seriously injured that he was conveyed in a precarious condition to Eaton.

On 19th April, 1820, between seven and eight o'clock in the evening, Mr. John Pale, draper, of Oundle, was stopped between Norman Cross and Kate's Cabin by two highwaymen, who robbed him of £12 in bank notes, 25s. in silver, a silver watch, and part of his clothing.

On Saturday, 18th of October, 1823, "as John Smith, between 60 and 70 years of age (who was a few years since a farmer and grazier at Somersham, but who now, through the depression of the agricultural interest, is obliged to keep a small day school, which scantily supports him in his declining days) was returning from Cambridge to Somersham, by St. Ives afoot, he was met by a strong young fellow, within a mile and a half from home." The young

man accosted Mr. Smith with the customary formula used by highwaymen "Stand and deliver!" "Deliver what?" asked Smith. "All you have" said the man, and he instantly wrenched the stick with which Smith was walking from his hand, and struck him a violent blow on the forehead. Smith staggered and fell, and the robber threw himself upon him. "Do you mean to murder me?" asked Smith. "I mean to have all you have" replied the robber. Smith then seized fast hold of the highwayman's hair and a fierce scuffle ensued, during which both rose from the ground together. Smith still retaining hold of his assailant's hair, told him he would have to go back with him. The highwayman refused. "Then," said Smith, "you shall go forward with me," and immediately changing his hold from his hair to his collar, he forced him about half a mile on the road until they reached a cottage, when Smith called up a man of the name of Savage, who assisted in conducting the highwayman to Somersham, where he was given into the hands of the constables, and was afterwards convicted at the Huntingdon assizes.

On 31st Oct., 1823, in the evening, while the Regent down Coach was standing at the Inn, at Huntingdon, waiting for the passengers who were at dinner, the horses which had just been yoked to, were

alarmed by the passing of the Highflyer coach, and in spite of the efforts of the horsekeeper to restrain them, set off without the coachman, and proceeded three miles before they were stopped. Although it was dark and the coach passed a post chaise and a van, through a flock of sheep, and down a steep hill, before the person who pursued on horseback overtook it, not the slightest accident occurred. The only person on the coach at the time was a soldier, who sat behind, and it was not until the horses were stopped that he knew he was travelling without a coachman.

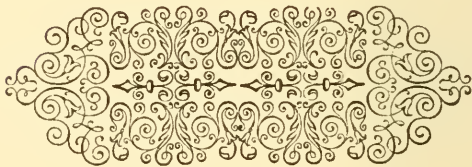
Mr. Pettinger, of Godmanchester, was driving home from St. Neots on the evening of December 17th, 1834, and when near to the cross roads a man accosted him and asked for a ride. Mr. Pettinger knowing that this was a dodge often adopted by highwaymen, and having regard to the darkness of the night, at once refused the request and applied the whip. But another man instantly sprang into the gig from behind, knocking off Mr. Pettinger's hat and covering his face with his hands; a second villain also sprang into the gig, and a third, seizing the horse's head, backed it violently, so that the gig went into the ditch. Mr. Pettinger was then dragged out, and a brown net silk purse, containing seven or eight shillings, and his watch were taken from him; the

chain and seal of the latter were found at the bottom of the vehicle on his arrival at home. Only one of the ruffians spoke, and he merely said "D—you, hold your tongue." The men leaped out of the vehicle and were quickly lost in the darkness.

A severe encounter with highwaymen took place near Ripton in April, 1840. Mr. Edward Masters, of Great Raveley, was riding homeward on his way from Bedfordshire, when he was stopped by three men near the way post on the Ripton road. It was dusk, and Mr. Masters, who had a considerable sum of money in his pocket, struck the man who had seized the bridle a heavy blow on the head, which felled him to the ground in an apparently lifeless condition. The other two, however, immediately sprang at him and endeavoured to unhorse him. After a violent struggle Mr. Masters succeeded in laying another of the robbers insensible on the road, and then striking spurs into his horse, galloped ahead. In the struggle half his coat was torn off, and fortunately it was not the pocket containing the money. He had changed the money only half an hour before, on passing through Huntingdon.

In October, 1840, the Rising Sun Coach was proceeding from Huntingdon to Ely, when, about six miles from the former place, it came in contact with a

gig which it dashed to pieces ; the driver and horse fortunately escaped without serious injury. The coach itself, from the enormous quantity of luggage piled upon the roof, was observed to rock fearfully in its progress, and about three miles from Cambridge it upset, and buried the ten outside passengers (half of whom were Cambridge students) under the luggage. Although all were terribly injured, none of them were killed.





## Chapter VI.

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### CURIOUS TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTIONS.

The following inscriptions are taken from tombstones in St. Neots church yard:—

On the tombstone of Adam Love:

“Why wonder we that man no more  
Is by affection led,  
When this sad stone declares to all  
Alas, that Love is dead?”  
Why, that the history of the past  
Is cruelty and pride,  
When the same monument records  
That Love with Adam died.”

---

On the tombstone of — Edis:

“Praises on tombs are vainly spent;  
A man’s good life is the best ornament.”

“In Memory of Philip Fairey, who died March 7th, 1818, Aged 57 Years.

Beneath this Stone the Ashes rest,  
Of him who wealth nor wit possess'd ;  
On whom the Almighty Arbiter  
Was pleased few Talents to confer.  
READER, if more to thee are given,  
By the rich boon of bounteous Heaven,  
Thy Talent to improve take care ;  
For the great Day thyself prepare.

This Stone was set up by Subscription as a mark of respect For a reward of Industry.”

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On a tombstone in Bluntisham church yard is the following inscription on Adrian Lucas, a celebrated prize fighter and wrestler, who died in May, 1671 :—

“Here lyes the conqueror conquered,  
Valiant as ever England bred,  
Whom neither art, nor steel, nor strength,  
Could e'er subdue, till death at length,  
Threw him on his back ; and here he lyes,  
In hopes hereafter to arise.”

---

In the north aisle of St. Ives parish church is the following :—

“Near this place lies Dingley Askham, late of this town, gent., and Frances his wife. He was the

youngest son of John Askham, of Boston, Lincolnshire, esqr., by Mary his wife, who was one of the daughters of Sir William Bury of Grantham, in the said county, Knt. ; she was one of the daughters of Robert Clarke, late of this town, gent., deceased, by Frances his wife, who was one of the daughters of George Benson of Towcester, in the county of Northampton, gent., deceased, left issue, Dingley Robert ; he departed this life 9th Jany 1728 ; she 15th Jany 1728."

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Until a few years ago there was a tombstone in St. Ives church yard, on the body of a man, who, in his life, had been an enthusiastic admirer of the game of "All Fours." The only inscription on the stone was the following :—

"Here lies the body of All Fours,  
Who spent his money and pawned his clothes ;  
If any one should ask his name,  
'Tis High, Low, Jack and the Game."

---

On the east wall of All Saints' Church, Huntingdon, in the grave yard, is the following inscription :  
"This monument is erected to the memory of Thomas Getherell, late of this town, maltster and corn merchant, who died on June 22nd, 1778. He was an example of piety during his life, and of honesty at his

death; and although bankruptey brought his character for a while under a cloud, his religion inspired him with sentiments, at least, to dissipate it, by bequeathing all his after acquisitions, which were considerable, to his creditors, to whom his conscience only could determine them due. That if he scandalized the world by some miscarriage, he hath instructed it by repairing them to the utmost of his power; who chose rather to leave his relations in want than transmit to them a patrimony of malediction, and to give them an example of equity rather than the fruit of injustice. Go thou and do likewise.”

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In the chancel of St. Mary's church, Huntingdon, is a well executed tablet to the memory of Mary Elizabeth, wife of Rear-admiral Montagu, the following being part of the inscription: “With a mind most pure and delicate in its texture, and with a disposition peculiarly sweet, at an early age undertook the arduous and sacred duties connected with the state of matrimony; and passed the short remainder of her days in zealous endeavours to fulfil them.”

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In Alwalton church yard there is a gravestone to John Head, who died in 1835, and the first line of the epitaph is “This languishing ‘head’ is at rest.”

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There is also in the same church yard, a gravestone to Ambrose Hill, a boy of 13, who fell into the Nene and was drowned, with the following epitaph:—

“Upon my way I met pale death,  
The rapid stream soon closed my breath,  
This fatal accident you see  
My gracious God allotted me,  
My tender years did not afford (*sic*) me care,  
I lost my life before I was aware ;  
Dear parents be comforted,  
Grieve not for me  
For I am the Lord’s,  
And was but lent to ye.”

---

In Ramsey church yard there are several curious inscriptions:—

One stone records the case of Mark True, of Stan-  
ground, who was killed by “a murderous stroke,” so it  
is recorded on the stone. On the 22nd day of July,  
1780, in the 27th year of his age, he lost his life at  
Ramsey Fair.

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“To the memory of Dugald McDonald, a native of  
Argylshire, Scotland, late hospital assistant-surgeon to  
her Majesty’s forces, September 21st, 1817, aged 30  
years.” Dugald had wandered away from his native  
hills, and laid him down to rest on the borders of the  
Fen.

“A young man’s life may well comparéd be  
Unto the blossom of some fruitful tree,  
Which one day seems so pleasant, fair, and gay,  
And on the morrow fades and dies away.”

—

In St. Ives church yard there is a curious inscription, the first two lines being :—

“A crumb of Jacob’s Dust lies here below,  
Richer than all the mines of Mexico.”

—

The following is on the gravestone of three infants in the same church yard :—

“Bold Infidelity turn pale and die !  
Beneath this stone three infants’ ashes lie.  
Say—Are they lost or saved ?  
If death’s by sin they sinned because they’re here  
If heaven’s by works in heaven they can’t appear.  
Reason—ah, how depraved !  
Review the Bible’s sacred page the Knot’s untied,  
They died for Adam sinned—they live for Jesus died.”



## Chapter VII.

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### GREAT STORMS AND FLOODS.

Strange storms were by no means unfrequent on Whittlesey Mere, doing great damage to the boats and nets of the fishermen. For instance, Holland says:—The lake “does sometimes, in calms and faire weather, sodainely rise tempestuously, as it were into violent earthquakes, to the damage of the poore fishermen, by reason as some thinke, of evaporations breaking violently out of the bowels of the earthe;” and Mr. Spencer says:—“These lakes or meres are subject to great convulsions, and often appear as agitated in the same manner as the sea, which has been generally ascribed to wind confined up in the bowels of the earth, when bursting out with a furious explosion occasions that agitation which often resembles an earthquake.”

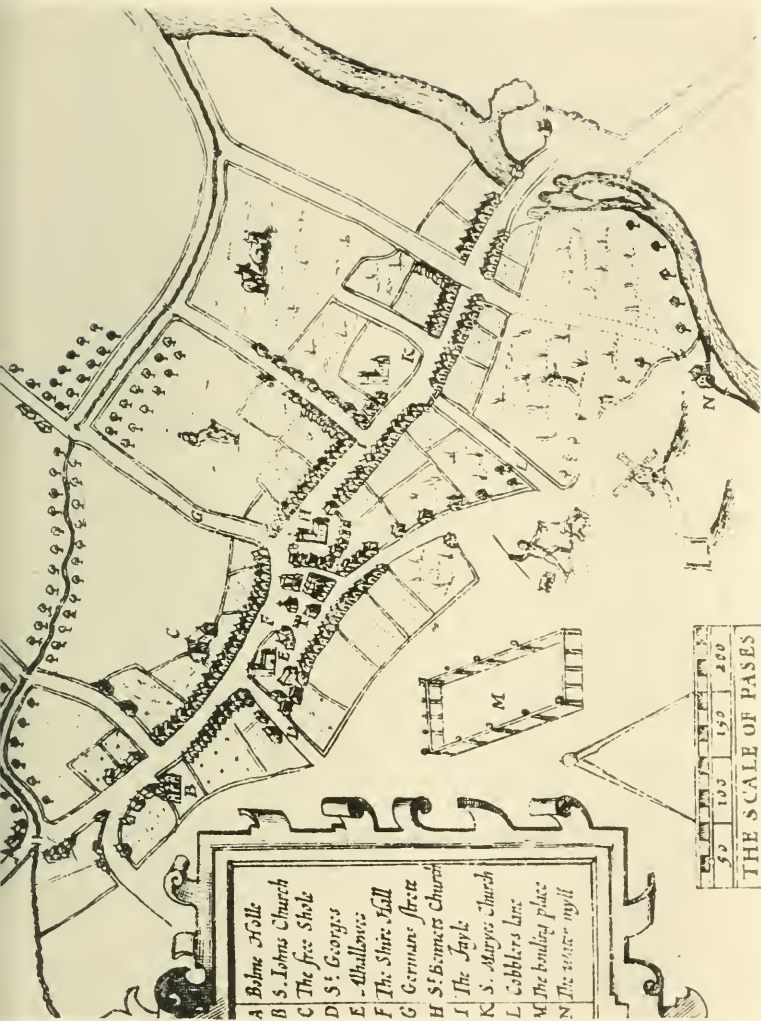
On Aug. 24th, 1465, it is recorded that hailstones, measuring eighteen inches in circumference, fell at St. Neots.

In 1597 the town of St. Neots experienced a disastrous flood, which is thus described by Stowe in his Annals:—"In September and October fell great winds and raging floods in sundry places of this realm, and wherethrough many men, cattele, and horses, were drowned. The town of St. Edes in Huntingdonshire was overflowed suddenly in the night, when all men were at rest. The waters broke in with such violence, that the town was almost all defaced, the swans swam downe the Market place, and all the towne about the boats did float."

In 1636, on the 4th of November, "in the night tyme," a furious hurricane raged in the district of Huntingdon, doing immense damage to house property in the borough and the surrounding country. The south-west and north-east pinnacles of St. Mary's church, which had then only been re-built about 30 years, were blown down; and the storm passed over the fens to the sea, carrying devastation in its course, and inflicting great injury on shipping.

In 1741 the village of Bluntisham and the surrounding district suffered severely from a most extraordinary storm. About 12 o'clock, mid-day, a mist was seen to gather, and it rolled along the ground in





- A Bolme Halls
- B S. Johns Church
- C The free Shole
- D S. Georges
- E Alhallows
- F The Shire Hall
- G Germans street
- H S. Bennets Church
- I The Jayle
- K S. Marys Church
- L Cobblers Lane
- M The building place
- N The water myll

50	100	150	200
THE SCALE OF PASES			

MAP OF THE TOWN OF HUNTINGDON, 1610.  
in Drayton's Poly-Olbion.



a south-westerly direction with a noise that is described as thunder. Accompanying it was a driving wind, which rapidly increased in violence, until it attained such an extraordinary velocity that it laid a large portion of the village in ruins. All the barns in the district, the village ale house, the vicarage, and 12 other houses in the parish were all wrecked. The trees in the surrounding country were torn up by their roots in hundreds, wind-mills were deprived of their sails, and birds caught in it were dashed against buildings and trees and killed.

In September, 1797, a terrible flood occurred at St. Ives, said to be the greatest ever known. Farmers in the district suffered considerably, haystacks were washed away, and cattle and sheep drowned in large numbers, the water rising so rapidly that they were unable to be rescued. A drover, contrary to the advice of his landlord, persisted in leaving his flock of sheep, about 500 in number, in a close near to the river. He suffered for his temerity, nearly 200 of them being drowned. A post chaise travelling towards Cambridge was washed off the road, and the post boy with difficulty saved his life.

On Wednesday, June 15th, 1814, about two o'clock in the morning, the people of Huntingdon and Godmanchester were alarmed by one of the most frightful thunder storms ever recorded. At the latter place the

electric fluid entered a house by the chimney, and taking an oblique direction, left traces of its course within a few inches of a person in bed ; it then passed through a room on the ground floor, scattering a parcel of knives around in all directions, which hung wrapped up in sawdust against the wall ; from thence it passed through a window, leaving a hole like that made by a bullet, and powdering the surrounding glass with a sulphuric substance. The storm was accompanied by a deluging rain, which flooded many of the roads. The water was so deep at Alconbury Weston that the Glasgow mail coach had to go round by Huntingdon.

On September 2nd, 1816, it is stated there was an extraordinary depth of snow at Huntingdon and Cambridge, and the frost was so severe as to destroy all the crops of cucumbers, French beans, &c., growing in the market gardens round the city of Ely. Such weather was never experienced in harvest time before. But two days afterwards it was followed by a fearful thunder storm, accompanied with hail. At Alconbury Weston the damage done to the corn was very extensive, some sheaves standing in the field being scorched by what is described as a "fire ball."

During a memorable gale, on 5th Feb., 1817, the wooden framework of a building was blown down at

Alconbury on a carpenter's apprentice named Goodwin, killing him on the spot.

In October, 1823, after unusual storms, there were great floods. At Alconbury Weston, from the low situation of their dwellings, the inhabitants had to take shelter from the water in the parish church. The Glasgow mail on Saturday night got stuck fast in Tempsford bridge, the crown having been broken by the force of the water; and the guard with the mail bags, and the passengers, were compelled to alight, and wade a considerable distance mid-deep in water. The coach from London to Oundle was only able to travel 23 miles of its distance. The storms were accompanied by a furious gale, which blew a house down at Oundle, another at Elton, and another at Warmington. "Indeed," concludes the writer, from whom the above particulars are taken, "so great and so rapid was the flood that scarcely a village in this neighbourhood but has suffered damage more or less, the inmates of many of the houses being compelled to seek refuge in their top rooms." Another writer, speaking of the same serious storms, says: "Although St. Neots is very liable to inundation from any unusual fall of rain, so rapid and destructive a flood is not remembered by the oldest inhabitant. At eight o'clock in the evening of Oct. 30th, when the flood was at its highest, not a house in the town

but was inundated to a considerable depth ; in many the water ran over the shop counters, and in some it was more than five feet deep ; indeed, in one or two instances, it was up to the ceiling. Mr. Inkersole sustained damage to the extent of £1,200, and Mr. Burdell, grocer, to the extent of £500. One poor woman, who had been compelled to take refuge from the flood in the garret, remained from Saturday night to Monday morning without any food, it being impossible from the low situation of her dwelling to afford her any assistance ; persons were rowing about the Market-place in boats and brewing tubs, endeavouring to render aid ; and, amongst other things swept away by the destructive element, a pig-stye was seen floating down the streets. The walls of the town bridge were burst down by the impetuosity of the flood and the force of the tempest, and the arch was injured. At Eaton Socon a poor man was rescued from his dwelling in a boat only a minute before the house was overwhelmed. The Regent coach, from London to Stamford, was stopped in the flood, the horses swimming, and the passengers, 14 in number, had to be conveyed into St. Neots in boats for a distance of half a mile. The bridge next the mill was completely torn to pieces, and Mr. Towgood suffered to the extent of many hundreds of pounds."

On Sep. 23rd, 1831, a severe tempest occurred between four and five o'clock, during which Mr. Ralph Newton, of Sawtry, had four fine horses killed, a fine beast, and three sheep.

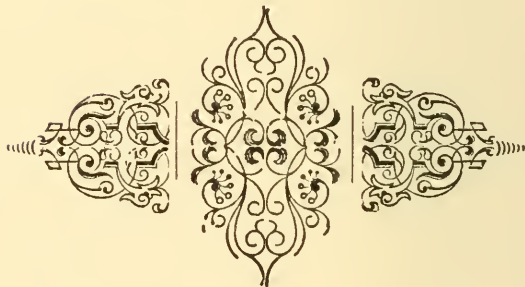
The town of Huntingdon and the neighbourhood were visited by a very heavy storm of thunder, lightning, hail and rain, on the 17th of Aug., 1837. The storm lasted for an hour in the morning, and the atmosphere continued heavy and sulphurous until the afternoon, when the most frightful tempest ever remembered broke over the town, which was for the time enveloped in darkness. The rain fell in such torrents that in one house it reached five feet in the kitchen, putting out fires, and floating the furniture. The engine of the Royal Exchange had to be used to get the water out of the houses.

On Sept. 30th, 1848, the whole district was visited with alarming rains and floods, "the like of which," says a private diary, "have not been known for 47 years. The water ran over the top of Peterborough town bridge."

On Feb. 28th, 1860, a dreadful storm of wind arose at about half-past 11 o'clock in the morning, and continued until about half-past two in the afternoon, which did more damage to property than any wind storm for 30 years. It was a west wind, and the force of it was so great that water was blown out of

the rivers Nene and Ouse similar to heavy showers of rain.

July, 1868, was the driest and hottest season ever experienced in this district. A great deal of barley had no rain from sowing to gathering. Nearly all the wheat was cut and carried in July.





## Chapter VIII.

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### MIRACULOUS WELLS.

Hail Weston was for about two centuries celebrated for two mineral springs, the medicinal properties of which were looked upon as being exceedingly efficacious in the cure of various diseases. From an old document it appears that these springs were first discovered in 1579, the water being looked upon as a certain cure for scrofula, eruptions, dimness of sight, etc. A notice, posted up at the time, says: "The springs are open from seven in the morning till 10 at night, the following being the charges :

Admission for using and drinking the	s.	d.
waters per month .....	5	0
Non-subscribers .....	0	6
Taking any quantity away from the		
wells, per quart.....	0	6

Hail Weston springs were first noticed in the reign of Elizabeth, as appears by the following passage in Holmstead: "The fift place of baths or medicinable Welles is at an Hamlet called Newton [*i.e.* Weston] a little from St. Neots, or (as we pronounce it) St. Needs . . . . where two springs are knowne to be, of which the one is verrie sweet and fresh, the other brackish and salt; this is good for scabs and leaperie (as it is said), the other for dimnesse of sight. Verrie manie also doo make their reparie vnto them for sundrie diseases, some returning whole, and some nothing at all amended, because their cure is without the reach and working of those waters. Never went people so fast from the Church, either vnto a faire or market, as they go to these wels . . . . discovered in this 1597 of grace."

Michael Drayton alludes to the Holy Wells of "Harlweston" in his "Poly Olbion," published in the year 1613, as follows, speaking of the Ouse:—

"The Muse, Ouze from her Fountaine brings  
Along by Buckingham and sings:  
The earth that turneth wood to stone,  
And t'holy Wells of Harlweston."

After describing the course of the Ouse and remarked that it

"Shoots forward to St. Neots, unto these nether  
grounds

Towards Huntingdon, and leaves the loved Bedfordian bounds,"

He proceeds :—

“Scarce is she entered yet vpon this second sheere  
Of which she soveraigne is, but that two fountains  
cleere

At Harlweston neere hand, th’ one salt, the other  
sweet,

At her first entrance thus her greatnesse gently  
greet.

Once we were two fair Nymphs who  
fortunately provéd

The pleasures of the woods, and faithfully belovéd.  
Of two such sylvan gods, by hap they found vs  
here,

For then their sylvan kind most highly honoured  
were,

When the whole country’s face was forresty, and we  
Liv’d loosely in the weilds which now thus peopled  
be.

And quoth the saltish spring, ’as one day  
Muse and I,

Set to recount our loves, from his more tender eye  
The brinish teares dropt downe on mine unpeared  
breast,

And instantly therein so deeply were imprest  
That brackish I became. He finding me deprived

Of former freshness quite, the cause from him deprived.

On me bestowed this gift, my sweetness to requite,  
That I should ever cure the dimnesse of the sight !

‘And’ quoth the fresher spring, ‘the  
wood-god me that woo’d,

As one day by my brim surprised with love he  
stood

On me bestowed the gift, that ever after I

Should cure the painful itch, and loathsome  
leprosie!”

The historian Fuller observes in his humourous style :—“The very name soundeth somewhat of sanativity therein : so much may the addition of what is no letter alter the meaning of a word ; for 1, *Aile*, signifieth a sore or hurt, with complaining, the effect thereof : 2, *Haile* (having an affinity with *Heile* the Saxon Esculapius) imputeth cure or medicine to a maladie. Now in the aforesaid village there be two fountainlets, that are not far asunder, (1) one sweet, conceived good to help the dimnesse of the eyes ; (2) the other in a great measure salt, esteemed sovereign against the scab and leprosie. What saith St. James ? ‘Doth a fountain send forth at the same place, sweet water and bitter ?’ meaning in an ordinary way, without miracle. Now although these different waters flow from different fountains, yet seeing

they are so near together it may justly be advanced to the reputation of a wonder."

In 1770 the spring was still highly esteemed, for a work, published in that year, says:—"There is a mineral spring at a village called Hail Weston, near St. Neots, which is esteemed extremely useful in curing many disorders incident to the eyes and likewise for eruptions of the skin."

At Somersham there was a mineral spring, discovered by Dr. Layard, but the virtues are now entirely neglected.

At Holywell, a village on the east of St. Ives, there is a spring of very soft water, rising near the church yard. Like many other springs, it either possessed, or was reputed to possess, healing qualities, which caused it to be visited by large numbers. Some writers have urged that in pre-reformation times its healing qualities were ascribed to a miraculous agency but there is no evidence of this.



## Chapter IX.

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### FEATS AND WAGERS.

At the close of the 18th and commencement of the 19th centuries the records throughout England abound with instances of curious feats and wagers. A few of those connected with Huntingdonshire are stated below:—

“Cooper Thornhill was a famous man, and it is recorded that he rode three times from Stilton to London in eleven hours, and that he won the cup at Kimbolton with a mare which he took accidentally on the course, after a journey of twelve miles. In a private diary of a contemporary resident the following entry appears:—“1745, Oct. 29th, Mr. Cooper Thornhill, innkeeper, Stilton, left there at 4 a.m., rode to the King’s Arms, Shoreditch, London, at 7-50 p.m., returned to Stilton immediately and

reached home at 4-15 p.m., 213 miles in 12 hours and 15 minutes, the bet being that the journey would take 15 hours. On the 4th, he rode the distance in 3 hours 56 minutes against time 4 hours and 30 minutes. Many horses engaged."

In 1789, the then famous prize fighters, Humphrey and Mendosey, visited Stilton on May 6th, and fought in the presence of a large number of spectators.

"Dare Devil," a horse, the property of Mr. J. Gilbert, ran, on Feb. 14th, 1798, from the "Black Swan," Peterborough, to the "Black Horse," Sawtry, a distance of 10 miles, and then back again, making 20 miles in all, in less than 57 minutes. It was ridden by a man weighing 8st. 5½lbs.

A trotting match against time was performed on the turnpike road, between Cambridge and Huntingdon, on Sept. 15th, 1798. The wager was for 400gs. to 100gs. that a certain horse would not trot 17 miles in 56 minutes. The horse, however, performed the task "with seeming ease in 52 minutes, to the surprise of many spectators." The animal is thus described: "The mare is blind with one eye, 17 years of age, and was lately purchased for 10gs. ; she is again matched to trot 19 miles within the time."

A similar match took place on the 14th July, 1800, on the road between Cambridge and Huntingdon, when a horse, the property of a dealer in London,

started against time to trot 17 miles in one hour, which he completed in 56 minutes. It is added: "many bets were depending, and the wager was a very considerable sum of money."

The following is an ordinary announcement of a cock fight: "Cocking. To be fought at the Fountain Inn, Huntingdon, on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, the 29th, 30th, and 31st of July, 1800, between the gentlemen of Huntingdonshire and Warwickshire, a Main of Cocks: to shew thirty one in the Main, for five guineas a battle and one hundred the odd; and eleven byes, for two guineas a battle. To fight in fair silver spurs. Two Ingoes each day. To begin at 10 o'clock precisely. Small and Gilliver, Feeders."

The Duke of Rutland purchased a horse from Capt. Wardell for 400gs., in March 1802, and the animal had the reputation of being "a most astonishing leaper," for "a few weeks since it leaped a river near Huntingdon, ten yards wide."

A grey mare, the property of Mr. Stevens, of Godmanchester, in September, 1804, trotted 15 miles on the road between Huntingdon and Cambridge in 56 minutes, carrying 13st. 7lbs.

A "battle" was fought at Huntingdon, on the 31st Oct., 1804, between J. Fuller, a waterman, of Stanground, and John Fisher, of Godmanchester,



shepherd, when the former was killed on the spot. Fisher absconded, but a reward was offered for his apprehension.

Two men at Brampton mills, in June, 1816, set themselves a Herculean task. While measuring barley they challenged each other who should measure the fastest for a gallon of ale. The first in 20 minutes and a half sacked 20 quarters, his companion completed the same number in 20 minutes, thus filling the bushel, striking, and emptying it into a sack, eight times each minute.

Mr. Charles Green, of Buckden, in April, 1818, laid a wager of £10 that he had a horse, of a small size, which would draw 10qrs. of barley from the Red Lion Inn, Alconbury, to his house in Buckden, a distance of nearly five miles, in two hours. The wager was accepted, and the pony was loaded with 20 sacks of corn, and it accomplished the task in one hour and 37 minutes. The grain and waggon weighed two tons and 13 cwts.

A boxing match took place at Horsey Bridge, on 12th May, 1819, between Robt. Woods, a "whittower," of Stilton, (formerly a life guardsman), weighing 12st. 7lbs., and John Brown, a baker, of Peterborough, weighing 11st. 12lbs. The fight was for a purse of £40 made up by the combatants. The fight took place at 10 o'clock in the morning, in the

presence of a large concourse of spectators, who formed a 150 feet ring. Mendosa, jun., a London pugilist was second to Brown; and Jones, also a London pugilist, was second to Woods. The four first rounds were much in favour of Brown, and the betting on him was six to four; but in the fifth round Woods planted a blow on the head and a tremendous body-blow, which felled his antagonist, and changed the battle. The betting was then four to one in favour of Woods. From this time the tide of success was all his own, and after 18 rounds, which lasted 25 minutes (only half a minute being allowed between the rounds), Woods was hailed as victor, very little the worse for the encounter, whilst Brown, dreadfully beaten, was obliged to give in.

During the Huntingdon race days, in 1822, a Main of Cocks was fought between the gentlemen of Huntingdonshire (Fleming, feeder), and the gentlemen of Cambridgeshire (Shadbolt, feeder), for 10gs. a battle and 200 games the main, 26 mains 15 byes. The scoring was :—

FLEMING.	M.	B.	SHADBOLT.	M.	B.
Tuesday .....	3	1	Tuesday.....	5	5
Wednesday.....	2	5	Wednesday.....	6	1
Thursday .....	8	1	Thursday .....	2	1
	<hr/>			<hr/>	
	13	7	dr. main.	13	7

Mr. Abbot, of Bridgetown, Huntingdonshire, on 9th Oct., 1823, started on a match to gallop 60 miles in three hours at daybreak for 200 sovereigns, on six successive horses. The rider weighed 9st. 8lbs. mounted, and betting was five to four on time. He started upon a fine blood mare belonging to Herbert Pearson, Esq., at Alconbury, and did 11 miles in 32 minutes. He rode the next horse, "Beader," 12 miles in 34 minutes, and the third horse 7 miles in 24 minutes, making 30 miles in an hour and a half. The fourth horse performed 11 miles in 33 minutes, the fifth did 9 miles in 24 minutes, and the last horse belonging to the rider went 10 miles in 27 minutes, and won the match with four minutes to spare. The match, it is said, equalled the famous ride of Milton's race against time to Stamford.

In June, 1840, two men at Huntingdon laid a wager as to which of them could drink the greater quantity of raw rum. One of them, named Peacock, upon finishing drinking went home and shortly afterwards expired. The other recovered, and when informed of the death of his companion, he exclaimed: "He has died in his glory, and I hope I shall die like him!"

On 15th January, 1859, a steeple chase came off on the North Road, between Chesterton and Waternewton, between Mr. Ser's and Mr. Brown's horses.

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82 *Legends, etc., of Huntingdonshire.*

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The amount of the stakes is not recorded, but the match was witnessed by large numbers of people, including Lord Milton, the Earl of Aboyne, Hon. G. W. Fitzwilliam, T. Thomson, Esq. Mr. Ser's horse won by five yards.



## Chapter X.

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### THE LAST OF THE MASONS.

For more than three centuries there flourished in this county a family named Mason, whose seat was at Great Gransden. They originally came from Yorkshire, but settled in Huntingdonshire it is supposed about the year 1400, and remained there until the beginning of the last century, when the estates were sold, and the family, so far as their connection with Huntingdonshire was concerned, ended.

Not to go too far back, we find a Simon Mason in the early part of the 17th century in possession of his ancestors' estates. He married three times, each wife bringing to him a handsome fortune. This enabled him to considerably improve his residence. His grandson (who wrote his own life), tells us that his ancestor "built a large handsome house with gardens,

groves, fish ponds, long rows of trees leading up to a pleasant large wood, a very agreeable place, in a good situation, about fifty measured miles from London, in the centre of several market towns." This "agreeable place, in a good situation," was the parish of Great Gransden. As to the value of the estates at that time, the grandson says: "I can't say exactly what my grandfather died worth, but to the best of my knowledge 'twas near twenty thousand pounds; he left three daughters, whose fortunes were three thousand pounds each." An estate worth in 1680, twenty thousand pounds, was by no means a mean possession. Either this Simon Mason or his father, by a will dated 1679, left a yearly sum of money to buy coals for the poor of the parish of Great Gransden. This charity still exists, the distribution being made annually in accordance with the terms of the will. The money is derived from land at Over, in Cambridgeshire. A son and heir was born to Simon Mason in 1689, and he was carried to the font in Great Gransden church, and received the same christian name as his father, but while yet a child his father died, and he was placed under the care of his uncle, John Mason, then an attorney at St. Ives. His uncle, having regard to the fact that his young charge was the head of the family and the heir to the estates, had him educated in a manner befitting his station.

After leaving school he was sent to Cambridge University, where he was admitted as a pensioner of Clare Hall. He afterwards took chambers in Lincoln's Inn and was called to the Bar. He then returned to the family seat at Great Gransden, but did not lead an idle life but practised as a barrister at law. He married Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Thomas Salmon, rector of Mepsal, in Bedfordshire, by whom he had seven sons and six daughters.

With regard to the time he spent under the care of his uncle at St. Ives, the son writes: "I can't say what account his uncle gave of his stewardship, when he was guardian for my father, though I believe it was a very bad one, as I have often heard my father relate." Bad or good, Simon Mason felt himself under an obligation to his uncle, and when his uncle was appointed General Receiver for Huntingdonshire, he became security for him to the government to the extent of several thousand pounds. There was possibly another motive for this, because being his uncle's heir, he wished to conciliate him. It was, however, an evil day for himself, his wife, and his thirteen children, when he signed the bond, for although his uncle was "esteemed an honest man in great circumstances," he managed to break, being at the time of his failure in the government's debt to the extent of some thousands. Messengers were con-

sequently at once despatched to take possession of the Masons' Gransden estates, which were sold to make good the uncle's deficiencies. The uncle made "a decent retreat with a modest revenue of about two hundred pounds per annum into the Fleet, where he lived many years very genteely."

The writer quoted above, adds: "This fatal blow of an extent for the government to seize and sell so great a portion of my father's estate, began the destruction of a family who had lived so many years in plentiful fortunes and good esteem. Here began a scene of affliction which brought on other unhappy law disputes that lasted many years, and so reduced my father, having a large family to support, that he lived very little in the county afterwards; as his chief dependence was upon his practice as counsel which obliged him to be mostly in London, where, in 1725, he died of a pleurisy at his lodging near the Temple in Fleet Street, in the 36th year of his age."

Concerning this last illness, his son gives the following account, which will be read as affording an insight into the progress of medical science during the past 150 years. He describes his father previous to this attack of pleurisy as "an Hearty, Healthy Man," and says:—"I went to London to my father for advice, whom I found out of order, with the symptoms of a pleurisy, and the next day, he growing worse, I asked



him who was his physician, he told me Dr. Lewis, who was his old acquaintance, and co-temporary with him at Clare Hall. I sent immediately for Dr. Lewis, who came and according to custom ordered hot medicines, without bleeding, which he took; the symptoms increasing he blistered him and gave oyl and syrups in plenty! More boluses, and Juleps!" He goes on: "I was then but a young practitioner, yet old enough to disapprove the Doctor's practice, my father in a high fever, with an acute pain in his side, a difficulty in breathing, with a set red colour in his face. I address'd my father in this manner. Sir, to stand by and see a father lost for want of proper treatment, is what I can't tacitly submit to, without being guilty of the greatest breach of duty, which would give me a lasting concern, was I not, before it is too late I hope, to apprise you of your danger; your case requires immediate large bleeding which has been omitted too long, and instead of these hot medicines, they ought to be cooling diluting medicines; you may drink cool tankard and small beer if you please, and I have too much reason to fear that unless you are directly treated after this manner you'll not reccever. I tell you my thoughts as I ought to, and if you'll give me leave I'll mention it to the Doctor, and if he don't consent to what I propose I shall break in upon distinction, and take upon me to relieve you: Here I

must observe that the little knowledge I had so early acquired in physick was chiefly owing to my late valuable friend Dr. Wallis, then fellow of Magdalen College, Cambridge, who took no small pains to improve the imperfect ideas I had of the practice of physick ; but to return, my Father thanked me, and commended me for my regard, but answered: Simon, you are a young man, your notions may be just and seem so to be, but should I die under them, that may give uneasiness to yourself and room for others to reflect, so I think it will be most advisable to pursue the doctor's directions, which we did. I told Mr. Barecroft, his apothecary, my sentiments, who told me if I desired it he would take the method I proposed, which he believed to be right, but according to my father's desire forbore, and soon I was an eye witness of the consequences of such treatment, and my father was interred in St. Dunstan's Church, Fleet Street, in the year 1725."

Filial affection prompts the son thus to describe his father: "The misfortunes that happened to my father were such as might have happened to any other gentleman. He suffered by his uncle, from whom he had great expectations. Had my father neglected his wife and numerous family, and spent his estate in boxing and debauchery, or had he either gamed or sported it away, he must not only have been repudiated

by the world, but blamed and censured by his wife and children. But in justice to his memory I must assert, he was a great scholar, an eminent counsel, a sober, honest, religious man, who scorned in all circumstances of his life a mean action, and abhorred a dishonest one, but was ever steadfast to his trust, he was a loving husband, and tender father. The regard and compassion he had for the distressed often engaged him in pauper causes which he used to support at his own expense, and at a time he could not well afford it, but as it was from a motive of doing good, I hope he now receives his reward in heaven."

The last of the Masons was the autobiographist whose words have been quoted above. He was born, before the evil fortunes befel the family at Great Gransden, in the year 1701. He was the eldest son of a family of eight, consisting of four boys and four sisters. He went to school at Great Gransden until he was ten years of age, when his uncle, a physician at Bishop's Stortford, took him in hand and had him educated in that town under Dr. Tooke. In after life he published his life, the title page being:—

"A narrative of the life and distresses of Simon Mason, apothecary. Setting forth the injurious treatment he hath met with; with many other transactions, in a series of events, both serious and diverting, &c."

In this volume he says:—"I studied at Bishop's

Stortford school, till my uncle could send me to the University of Cambridge and be bred a physician or go to London and be bred an apothecary ; but I, like other silly boys, willing to get from school, refused to go to Cambridge, which to this day I earnestly lament, but imprudently chose to go apprentice to an apothecary in London."

He describes the following incidents in connection with his apprenticeship : His mistress, Mrs. Cornelius, " would have brought about a match, betwixt me and Miss Westron, an only daughter of a wealthy haberdasher of small wares, next door but one to us. This young gentlewoman, as never being from home, was wanting in those accomplishments her fortune required, and her charms were chiefly in her Father's long Baggs, who was computed to be a twenty thousand pound man. My good mistress, in order to my carrying on an amour, got a milk-woman into the secret, where I was to meet Miss to drink Sillabub; and I believe had I followed the advice my mistress gave me, by a close pursuit of my addresses, I should have succeeded. But the principal reason of my indifference was, a Pretty young lass apprentice to my namesake a milliner at the Queen's Head, in Lombard St., with whom I was much captivated, and she really was a well bred, sober, genteel, young woman, whose accomplishments and person were equally engaging.

She was the daughter of a respectable attorney in the city." The young lady's name was Miss Nanny Stacey, and according to advice given him, they decided to part, both being too poor to engage in matrimony.

Shortly afterwards, however, having left his old master, he fell in love again with the daughter of one of his master's patients. He says: "I contracted such a liking to her, that I asked her father-in-law if he would bestow his daughter on me?" And "I told the father and mother I liked their daughter so well, if they would give me three hundred pounds (for which sum Mr. Clarke would take me into partnership) I would gladly marry their daughter." The money was promised, and the two were married October 4th, 1722. "In a few days," says the bridegroom, "I was too much convinced what must be the unhappy consequences of so rash and irretrievable an action. God knows, I had only £5 I borrowed of a distiller's man to purchase a license and to pay for the celebration of those happy nuptials, and after a wedding dinner at the Swan at Chelsea my stock was greatly exhausted, and instead of three hundred pounds not one farthing. A dinner or two I was favoured with when I soon discovered a coolness. My new mother first began with her dislike to my tye-Wigg and Ruffles; she thought they were too grand for her

son, and indeed, I as soon thought they did look too grand for my new parents. I told good madam Pemberton, Ruffles were what I ever wore, and most of my profession did tye-wiggs, as for me I wore them most part of my apprenticeship."

Then commenced a life of trouble. The pages of the author's life bristle with relations which impress the reader with an idea that all men and even the elements had conspired against poor Simon to bear him to the ground. At the conclusion he sums up his misfortunes thus : "my sufferings have been such as no man besides myself ever underwent ; for there is no man but surely saw some happy days in thirty years."

The last record of him is a work "Some Practical Observations in Physick," which he published somewhere about the year 1754.



## Chapter XX.

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### LADY BLANCHE, OF COLNE.

Early one morning, in the latter part of the reign of King Edward III., some houses at Colne were discovered to be in flames. The fire was with difficulty extinguished, and an enquiry being made, several young men of the neighbourhood, animated with a love of mischief or with the desire to obtain some spoil, were strongly suspected of having wilfully set them on fire. The houses belonged to Lady Blanche Wake, a lady of royal descent, but whose character exhibits very little that can be admired. According to all accounts she was a cross-grained, ill-conditioned old maid, who would live peaceably with no one. She was naturally extremely indignant that these young men should have acted as they had done, and ordered them to be immediately arrested. But the culprits,

knowing that Lady Blanche had a particular old grudge against the Bishop of Ely, who resided in the palace at Somersham, about a mile from the ancestral home of the Wakes, conceived the idea of making out that his lordship had set fire to the houses. The Bishop was a good, pious, but plain spoken old soul, attending to the duties of his diocese and troubling himself very little about the old maid, his neighbour. But the Bishop was in bad odour just now at court. In those days Bishops in England had great and high ideas of the episcopacy; they spoke without any regard to persons, and Bishop Lylde had spoken his mind very freely to the King. Lady Blanche therefore conceived the idea of carrying into execution a plot by which she hoped she could make his lordship smart. In what way the Bishop had incurred the old lady's displeasure does not appear, but being of royal blood, she commenced a suit against him, in the King's court, for having set fire to her houses. No notice or summons was sent to the Bishop, but the lady having made an *ex parte* statement, by the commandment of the King, a *nisi prius* was issued against the Bishop, and he was ordered to pay £900. This order was the first intimation of the suit which the Bishop received. Like a dutiful subject, he paid the money, and at the same time demanded a trial by jury. In order to do this, however, a copy of the



former judgment was necessary. But Lady Blanche exerted her influence with the court, and the application was refused. Upon this, the Bishop himself went to the King, and, as we should say now-a-days, gave him a piece of his mind. Indeed he spoke so warmly that the King complained to the parliament then assembled of his conduct, and the parliament directed that he should never again enter the royal presence.

One day, shortly after this, some of the Bishop's servants were repairing a fence near the episcopal palace, when Lady Blanche's steward passing by, and probably partaking of his mistress's animosity to the Bishop, accused the man of encroaching upon her property. The man indignantly denied the charge. High words ensued, and then blows, and finally the steward got the worst of the fight and was killed. On hearing this news, and knowing how much consideration and justice he had to expect from Lady Blanche, the Bishop made every preparation for a flight. He sold several of his valuables, and placed his other property in the hands of friends, whilst he himself retired to a place of concealment. The inquest on the body of the steward was duly held, and Lady Blanche's indignation may perhaps be imagined. She succeeded in getting the jury to return a verdict against the Bishop, of being an accessory. Other

proceedings followed, and the Bishop's temporalities were seized. His lordship now thought that nothing more could be done, and he therefore emerged from his place of concealment, and answered to a summons to appear in the King's Bench. He then demanded a trial by his peers, but it seems as if there was no end to the Lady's influence, for this demand, which would in any other case have been granted, and which was a fair and honourable request, was refused by the judges, who confirmed the decision of the jury at the inquest. Judgment was accordingly given against him. The Bishop then applied to his ecclesiastical superior, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who advised him to try and make terms with the King, but knowing that he would have nothing to expect from this quarter, he resolved to have recourse to the assistance of the Sovereign Pontiff, whom he knew would be influenced by no other motives than those of justice. He therefore started for Rome, and having arrived there, he obtained an audience of the Pope, to whom he made his complaints. The Pope promised to do all he could to assist the poor man, and at once cited all concerned unto his court for the purpose of a fair trial being accorded the Bishop. Those, however, who had been instrumental in bringing about the Bishop's conviction, evaded this citation. They thus tacitly convicted themselves. The Pope at once directed

that as they refused justice to the Bishop they should be excommunicated, and commissioned the Bishop of Lincoln to pronounce the sentence. He did so, and, as many of the royal blood were condemned, and some of the King's privy counsel, his highness was naturally very much disturbed, but obstinately refused to do justice to his subject. On several occasions in English history we find that when the Pope, legislating with an equal hand, condemned princes as well as commoners, then the princes, as Henry VIII. for instance, essayed to oppose the spiritual power of the Pope. This was the case with Edward III. He thought that he would fight the church by forbidding all bulls from Rome to be brought into England. The Pope, however, continued to legislate for the members of the church in England, and some messengers bearing letters to the Bishop of Rochester were apprehended and executed. Upon this news being received in Rome, the Pope wrote to the King. The letter was full of tenderness and exhortations to an honourable course, but firm, and commanding that justice should be done to the Bishop. The King began to be of a better mind, and was about to follow the very good counsel of the Sovereign Pontiff, when he was prevented by the Bishop's death, and consequently a quarrel which might have assumed national proportions was put an end to.

## Chapter XIII.

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### THE DEAD DRUMMER BOY OF ALCONBURY.

Many of the present residents of Alconbury can recollect a tall, gaunt post, which stood beside the Great North Road, near the coppice between Alconbury and Brampton Hut, and around which, as boys, they were accustomed to play on summer evenings. The post, which was removed, or fell into decay, about 30 years ago, was known as Matchan's gibbet. Upon it, in the year 1786, was hung in chains the body of Gervase Matchan, who, six years before, had foully murdered a drummer boy, Benjamin Jones, on that spot; and who would have escaped the legal penalty of his crime had it not have been for the circumstances related in the following legend, which

are mainly extracted from Matchan's confession before the Rev. J. Nicholson, of Great Paxton.\*

Gervase Matchan, or Matcham, was the son of parents in the middle station of life, who lived at Fradlingham, in Yorkshire. He early displayed a love of adventure, and a dislike for the pastoral kind of life to which his parents in Yorkshire were devoted, and he therefore ran away from his home when he was only a little over 12 years of age. He went to the stables at Rise, of Mr. Hugh Bethell, and was there engaged either as a jockey or as a stable boy, probably the former, and continued in the service of that gentleman for five years, when he transferred his services to Mr. Turner, well known in sporting circles at that time. He then devoted himself to transactions in horse dealing, and was sent to Russia by the agent of the Duke of Northumberland, with a present of horses for the Emperor of that country. In making this journey he became captivated with the idea of becoming a sailor, and on his return to England, attached himself as an ordinary seaman, to one of his Majesty's ships of the line. He went on a cruise to the West Indies, but his realization of sailor life

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\* These circumstances supplied the Rev. R. H. Barham with the materials for the "Dead Drummer: a legend of Salisbury Plain," which forms one of the "Ingoldsby Legends."

not being equal to his anticipations, he left the service on returning to England, and attached himself to an infantry regiment. Military discipline, however, proved as distasteful to him as had that of the navy, and he influenced a private in the regiment to desert whilst they were stationed at Chatham. They succeeded in leaving the barracks at night, and passing a gentleman's residence in the neighbourhood, they effected an entrance, and stole civilian suits for themselves, and cast aside or buried their uniforms. They then trudged about the country for a time, until they came to Huntingdon races, with a view of picking up something. They were very nearly caught here, for they were arrested for being deserters, but they told an ingenious tale, and nothing of a military character being discovered about them, they were discharged. But finding it extremely difficult to get even food, and being in constant fear of arrest as deserters, Matchan resolved to re-enlist, and entered another infantry regiment, the 49th. He had not been in it many weeks when he was selected to accompany Benjamin Jones, a drummer boy in the regiment, and son of Quartermaster Sergeant Jones, to go to Diddington Hall, the residence of Major Reynolds, for subsistence money. This was on the 18th of August, 1780. The boy, who was a little more than 15 years of age, received

about £7 in gold, and both proceeded to make their return, but either by mistake or intentionally they took the wrong turn and went on to Alconbury, where they remained the night, and then retraced their steps in the direction of Huntingdon. As they walked along the road, the thought occurred to Matchan that he could easily appropriate the money then in their possession, if it were not for the lad by his side. If the drummer boy was out of the way, he could keep the money and be out of the kingdom before the theft was discovered. Instead of banishing the horrible temptation from his thoughts, he encouraged it, and then, as they were passing the wood, just before coming to Creamer's Hut, he suddenly seized the boy, and brutally murdered him by cutting his throat.

Having committed the crime, he seized the paltry bag of gold and fled, passing again through Alconbury, Stilton, and on to Wansford, where he bought a fresh suit of clothes. He then continued his journey to Stamford, where, with a portion of the money, he took a place on the York coach and visited his home at Fradlingham, where his father was now dead and only his mother living. The dead body of the murdered boy was not found until some days afterwards, by which time Gervase Matchan, with the money which had cost him so dearly, was on

board a ship, serving again as a sailor in the navy, for, having reached the shore, he at once fell a prey to the Press Gang. He fought in several naval engagements, but was discharged in 1786. But one day, crossing Salisbury plain with a sailor friend, the two were overtaken in a violent thunderstorm. Whilst the crashing thunder and the flashes of lightning were most appalling, Gervase Matchan was horrified to see a spectral figure standing in his path. It was described as something resembling a deformed woman. Greatly agitated, Matchan pointed out the figure to his companion, whose conscience being in a more healthy condition than that of Matchan, he threw a stone at it and it sank into the earth. Both becoming alarmed, they concluded that it was an evidence that one of them had been great offenders of the Divine law, and were required to make amends. With a view to determining which of them was the criminal, they decided to continue their journey apart from each other. They had not got far, when every boundary stone and mile stone on the road appeared to roll over as Matchan approached it, glaring at him with huge eyes, while nothing extraordinary happened to his companion.

Terrified, as only a guilty conscience will frighten a man, Matchan eagerly sought the refuge offered by an inn, but before they could enter it, Matchan

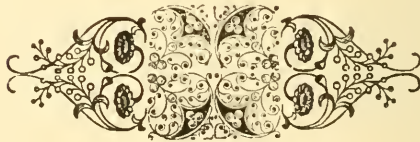


observed what he believed to be the figure of our Saviour standing on one side the road, and that of the Dead Drummer boy, standing with his uniform and his drum by his side on the other. They both entered the inn, and Matchan's companion related their experiences to the company, when the culprit acknowledged that he had murdered the boy six years previously, and voluntarily surrendered himself to the officers of the law. He was taken before the Mayor of Shrewsbury, and was sent for trial at Huntingdon assizes.

He was convicted and sentenced to death. After he had been executed, his dead body was ordered to be hung in chains upon the spot where the murder was committed, in order that the ghastly spectacle might serve as a warning to prevent similar crimes in future.

Cuthbert Bede (Rev. E. Bradley) furnishes the following particulars concerning Matchan's gibbet, in *Notes and Queries*, which he had gathered from an old man who had acted as ostler in the coaching days at the famous posting house on Alconbury Hill. "I mind too," said the old man, "the last gibbet as ever stood in Huntingdonshire. It was put up on the other side of Alconbury on the Buckden road. Matcham was the man's name. He was a soldier, and had been quartered at Alconbury; and he

murdered his companion, who was a drummer boy, for the sake of his money. Matchan's body was hung in chains, close by the road side, and the chains clipped the body and went tight round the neck, and the skull remained a long time after the rest of the body had got decayed. There was a swivel on the top of the head, and the body used to turn about with the wind. It often used to frit me as a lad, and I have seen horses frit with it. The coach and carriage people were always on the look out for it, but it was never to my taste. Oh, yes! I can mind it rotting away, bit by bit, and the red rags flapping from it. After a while they took it down, and very pleased I were to see the last of it."



## Chapter XIII.

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### A LEGEND OF ROBIN HOOD AT ALWALTON.

Standing within a few feet of Huntingdonshire soil, and connected with a Huntingdonshire Legend, are two large upright stones, by the side of the road leading from Alwalton to Castor. Any old resident in Alwalton, Chesterton, or the surrounding villages will, in answer to questions, state that the stones of "Gunneth Ferry," mark the spots to which Robin Hood and Little John, standing in Alwalton churchyard, shot each an arrow. The stones are generally known in the district by the name of Robin Hood and Little John.

They stand on the side of the hill directly after passing Milton Ferry from Peterborough, about 20 yards from the road, and two or three hundred yards from the river. They are about seven yards apart,

and stand about three or four feet above the ground. Both are nicked at the top in imitation of arrows, and both lean in a south westerly direction. The easterly one is not so high as its neighbour, being about 3ft. 6in. out of the ground, oblong in shape, two sides being about 15in. wide and the other two about 12in. The westerly stone is higher but smaller, being about a foot square. Both are covered with golden lichen, which is peculiar to the Barnack stone, and which can be seen growing on the exterior walls of Peterborough Cathedral.

The Robin Hood legend regarding the stones is thus told by Morton. He says: "Upon a green ridge still called St. Edmund's Balk, in Caistor Field descending to Gunwade Ferry, over which a bridge is now built (Milton Ferry), are two long stones, by the common people called Robin Hood and Little John, from the tradition of two arrows having been shot by those two old English worthies from Alwalton church-yard." Camden tells us the same story though he discredits it; he says: "In Casterfield, near Gunwade Ferry, are two long stones, standing upon a balk, which erroneous tradition hath given out to be two draughts of arrows from Alwalton church-yard thither, the one of Robin Hood, the other of Little John." There are two circumstances which lend a slight colouring to this story. One is that Robin Hood

and his squire Little John were famous for being able to shoot an arrow more than a mile, and that they were in the habit, in various parts of the country, of exhibiting their prowess in this respect, for the admiration of others, no one else being able to accomplish a similar feat. There is at Whitby a similar legend to that of Castor. Abbot Richard, of Whitby Abbey, requested Robin Hood and Little John to exhibit their dexterity as archers. They did so, and ascending the top of the Abbey, each shot an arrow more than a mile, the spot where each fell being marked by two large stones, which are said to exist there at the present time, and are popularly known, as those at Castor, as Robin Hood and Little John. The other circumstance which gives a colouring to the story is that Robin Hood was said to be Earl of Huntingdon, and many of his exploits took place in this district. In a "Pleasant Comodie called Look about You," published in 1600, he is thus spoken of:—

"Welcome, welcome and young Huntingdon.

Sweet Robyn Hude, honours best flowing bloome."  
But the more reasonable story attaching to the stones is thus told by Camden: "The truth is they (the stones) were set up to testify that the carriages of stone, from Barnack to Gunwade Ferry, and from thence to be conveyed to St. Edmund's Bury, should pass that way toll free. They are still called St.

Edmund's stones, and the balk, St. Edmund's Balk. The stones on the top are nicked after the manner of arrows, in memory of St. Edmund, who was shot to death with arrows." Gunton in his history of Peterborough adopts the same theory.

But whichever of those two stories is the 'correct one, nothing can rob the stones of their undoubted antiquity. The Barnack quarries have been exhausted for the last 600 years at least. It is evident therefore that the stones were placed in their present position at a time when the Barnack quarries were being worked. That would be in the days of Robin Hood, and also when the Abbey of St. Edmund's Bury, built of Barnack stone, was being erected. In either case there is a venerable antiquity attaching to them which makes their preservation a matter of more than local interest.



## Chapter XXV.

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### THE "VENERABLE" APREECE, OF WASHINGLEY.

The following is extracted from Bishop Challoner's *Supplement to English History*:—"This same year also (1644), as Mr. Austin writes (under the name of William Birchley) in his *Christian Moderator*, Mr. Price,\* a Catholic gentleman, was murdered at Lincoln in hatred of his religion. The story he relates thus—"I remember an officer of my acquaintance, under the Earl of Manchester, told me, that at their taking of Lincoln from the cavaliers, in the year 1644, he was an eye witness to this tragedy. The next day after the town was taken, some of our (the Parliament) common soldiers in cold blood,

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\* This is a mis-print for Apreece.

meeting with Mr. Price, of Washingley, in Huntingdonshire, a Papist, asked him, 'Art thou Price, the Papist?' 'I am,' said he, 'Price, the Roman Catholic,' whereupon one of them immediately shot him dead.'"

It is not generally known how terrible and bitter was the persecution against adherents to the old Catholic Faith in England, immediately after the establishment of the new religion. Mr. Green, in his "Short Account of the English People," has done something to make this fact more generally known. It would be difficult to enumerate the many acts of Parliament which were passed against the Catholics. It was a crime punishable with death to be a priest, death for any layman or any woman to shelter a priest, death for any one to attempt to argue with another to prove the faith of the old religion, and fine, forfeiture, and imprisonment for being a Catholic at all. Under such laws as these Tyburn was deluged with blood of priests and lay-people, and not only Tyburn, but almost every town in England of any importance, witnessed several of these butcheries. Under these laws, Henry Heath, a native of Peterborough, was hung, drawn, and quartered, for being a priest. Wisbeach Castle was filled with priests and Catholic laymen. And in addition to these legal executions, there were many instances similar to the case of Mr. Apreece, of Washingley, That same year



(1644) two priests, Father Kipton and Father Hesketh, were seized by the Parliamentary soldiers, and "driven on foot before them in the heat of summer ; by which cruel and outrageous usage they were so heated and spent, that they either forthwith or soon after died."

In the early part of the present year [1887] a decree was passed by the Sacred congregation of Rites at Rome, and which received the signature of Pope Leo XIII., declaring that Mr. Aprece had suffered death for the cause of religion, and declaring him to be worthy of the title of "Venerable." His name was included in a list of several hundreds of other priests and laymen who were butchered at the time of the Reformation in England for their adherence to the Catholic faith. The name of the Venerable Henry Heath, of Peterborough, was included in this list. The cause of the canonization of those mentioned in the list was commenced in the Ecclesiastical Court of Westminster, and the present decision is only the completion of the first step.

The Aprece family was one of the oldest in Huntingdonshire. For centuries they took a prominent part in the government of the county. In 1527 Robert Aprece was High Sheriff for the counties of Huntingdon and Cambridge, and held the same office again in 1543. Thomas George Aprece was High

Sheriff in 1818. John Apreece, who died in 1821, left money to be distributed to seven poor women of the parish of Stilton, who should have attained the age of 60 years. The money is annually distributed by the Vicar and Churchwardens.

Washingley Hall is still one of the finest of the many stately mansions which adorn Huntingdonshire. It is surrounded by a park, about 40 acres in extent, which contains a profusion of timber, and is ornamented with a fine piece of water. After the last member of the Apreece family had died—which occurrence took place in London in the early part of the present century under somewhat tragic circumstances—the hall remained uninhabited for some years. A large portion of the old house then fell in a great measure into decay, and the present building is almost entirely modern.



## Chapter XV.

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### GREAT CRIMES AND FAMOUS TRIALS.

#### HOW A ST. NEOTS MURDERER WAS DISCOVERED.

In the *University Weekly Journal* of March the 8th, 1740, the subjoined incident was recorded:—A woman living at St. Neots, returning from Elsworth, where she had been to receive a legacy of £17, for fear of being robbed, tied it up in her hair. Before she reached her home, she overtook her next door neighbour, a butcher by trade, who also kept an inn and lived in fair reputation. She was glad to meet him, told him what she had been about, and where she had concealed her money. The butcher finding a convenient opportunity, when they reached a lone

part of the road, dragged her from her horse, cut her head off and put it into his pack, and rode on as quickly as the horse could carry him. A gentleman and his servant coming by directly after, saw the body on the ground. He ordered the servant to gallop on at all speed, and to follow the first man he overtook wherever he went. The servant came up with the butcher about a mile in advance of the place whence he started, and asked what that town was before them? He replied "St. Neots." "My master," said the servant, "is just behind, and has sent me forward to enquire for a good inn." The murderer made answer that he kept one of the best in the town, where they should be well entertained. The gentleman overtook them, went to the house and dismounted, telling his man to look after the horses, whilst he took a stroll through the town and would return presently. He went straight to a constable and related the whole affair. The constable said the butcher was a very honest man, and had lived there many years with an excellent character. But he went back with the gentleman immediately, and searching the pack great was his surprise and consternation when he discovered and recognised the head of his own wife. The murderer was sent to Huntingdon gaol, tried shortly after, and executed.

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ASSASSINATION OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF  
ENGLAND BY MR. BELLINGHAM,  
OF ST. NEOTS.

On Monday, May 11th, 1812, as Mr. Spencer Perceval, the Prime Minister, was entering the House of Commons, a little before five o'clock, for the discharge of his important public duties, he was shot dead by John Bellingham, a bankrupt merchant, of Liverpool, and a native of St. Neots. The murderer had appealed to the government for compensation for losses sustained in the Baltic, and ministers had not been inclined to accede to his demands. This was the motive for the crime. Bellingham was executed at the Old Bailey, on May 18th, a week after the perpetration of the crime.

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THE CASE OF MRS. SCARBOROUGH.

In 1814, there was an establishment at Buckden, kept by Dr. Maltby, for the education of the sons of gentlemen. There was also another establishment, older than the former and better known, viz: the George Inn, one of the posting houses on the Great North Road. At the time above named, the landlord was Mr. Scarborough, and the extent of the business transacted may be imagined when it is stated that a sum of £35,000 was paid by the landlord to one firm of wholesale merchants. Mrs. Jane Scarborough was

the landlady. The following circumstance, related by this lady, throws a glare of light upon the manner in which the world travelled at that time. She says: "In the latter part of the year 1814, the Bell Inn, at Stilton, was offered for sale, but as a purchaser could not then be found, the person who occupied it continued in the premises, and conducted the business as usual, and we hoped that a tenant at least might in the course of a short time be met with. In this hope, however, we were disappointed, as the person who kept the house became a bankrupt, and no application was afterwards made for the inn. Now as this house, prior to the attempt to sell it, had fallen into disrepute, and as it was the next posting house to ours on the North Road, and in connexion with us, our business by such a falling off was materially injured, and the affair was becoming serious. We knew that the innkeepers in the line would not continue in connexion with our house at Buckden, if the Bell Inn, at Stilton was shut up, for they considered the Angel Inn at that place as a house too inferior for the first line of posting. In such a dilemma, what was to be done, and how were we to act? We hit upon the expedient of removing the difficulties that beset us, by taking the Bell for our son, a very steady young man, possessing a thorough knowledge of the business. He took possession of the "Bell" in May, 1815, and

as its effects were disposed of by auction, we purchased such of the horses, chaises, furniture, &c., as we thought proper. After completely repairing the house (which it much wanted), we fitted it up in a genteel and comfortable manner, at a very great expense. I advanced a thousand pounds of my own to assist, and our pains were rewarded by the satisfaction we gave universally to our friends and a generous public. Unfortunately for us, however, almost immediately afterwards a spirit of opposition arose upon the road, and in consequence the prices of posting were reduced, and company conveyed at a very low rate; in addition to which we were injured by the number of opposition coaches then running, for by these means people travelled for almost literally nothing. And bad luck (for nothing else can it be called), did not terminate here. At Michaelmas, 1815, a fresh tenant took possession of the Angel Inn, at Stilton, the house directly opposite to that which my son occupied. This man had no property of his own to lose, and therefore would not suffer by any adventurous schemes. He injured my son essentially; for having scarcely any business at his own house, he had the audacity and meanness frequently to put cards of his terms (which were reduced far below a fair scale), into the carriages which stopt at the Bell, and my son was, in consequence, com-

pelled to forward travelling parties on the same terms, or lose their custom altogether. Either alternative must be accompanied with loss, and of the two ends, he chose the former. This practice, so injurious not only to our affairs, but to those of every person engaged in it, ceased at the expiration of a year, when prices again rose to their proper level, and our opponent of the Angel found it expedient to quit the house."

But there were severer troubles in store for Mrs. Scarborough. Dr. Maltby, at the academy, had amongst his pupils a young gentleman named William Scott Preston, the son of a gentleman in London. One day in October, 1815, Mr. Preston, senr., gave his clerk a £20 note to post in a letter to his son at Buckden. Not having a wafer in his pocket, he put the letter in his pocket until he got home. He then wafered it down and gave the letter to a man to give to the Bellman. The address on the envelope was in Mr. Preston's hand writing, but it was very much blotted, and in some respects illegible to those who were not used to his writing. This letter, however, never reached its destination, but there was evidence that it was delivered to Mrs. Scarborough, at the George Inn. She was consequently accused by the Post Office officials of having stolen the note, and was indicted at the Huntingdon assizes, on the 28th



July, 1817, to answer the charge. Evidence was given tracing the letter, and also that soon after Mrs. Scarborough paid away a £20 note, which was alleged to have been the stolen one. Witnesses were called in defence to prove the excellent character of Mrs. Scarborough, amongst them being Sir James Duberley, George Thornhill, Esq., Rev. Dr. Maltby, Laurence Reynolds, Esq., Dr. Alvey, W. Day, Esq., G. J. Gorham, Esq. The jury brought in a verdict of guilty, and she was sent to prison for twelve months. Mrs. Scarborough afterwards published a "plain statement" of the circumstances, which leaves little doubt that she was wrongly convicted.

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STARVING A DAUGHTER AT STILTON.

In August, of 1856, great interest was excited throughout the county concerning an attempt made by a man named Crewe, of Stilton, with his two daughters, to starve another of his children, named Martha Crewe, 19 years of age. The father, and his two daughters, Eliza and Rebecca, were brought before the magistrates (Rev. W. Storey and Mr. Vipan), on Thursday, August 28th, an immense crowd having assembled outside the court. The poor girl, Martha Crewe, was brought from Stilton in a hand carriage, and her appearance, which is described as "more that of a dead than a living person,"

deeply affected every one who saw her. The following is some of the evidence:—Susan Smith, a neighbour of Crewe's, said: "For the last three years I have often heard Martha crying in her father's house for bread. When she came to my house I gave her a slice of bread and ham. Her ghostly look frightened me; I thought it was a ghost. She stood by my door with the food when her sister Eliza came up, took it from her and threw it at me, calling me a deceitful woman. I told Eliza that she, her sister, and her father, all deserved to go to prison, and she turned to Martha and said: 'You shall catch it for this.' I have offered to give her food, but her father and sisters have prevented me.—H. Wood, baker, said he had not seen Martha at all during the last three years, but had often heard her crying for bread, and had also heard her groaning all hours of the day and night. He made a stir in the parish two years ago, but was over-ruled by the parish.—The wife of this witness said she had endeavoured to send rice and pudding to the girl, but the father and sisters had always sent it back. She had heard the girl cry for bread and also for water, but had not seen her out of the house for years.—John Abbot, constable of Stilton, said he lived close to Crewe's. He had not seen Martha for two years. He knew she had been shut up since February, 1854, and was continually crying

out for food. I was passing one day, and I heard her call out, "Murder." I demanded to be let in. Her father refused, and I then broke down the door. I found one daughter, Rebecca, holding Martha in a small place against the stairs. When I entered, Martha held out her hands to me, and said "Oh, help me!" He fetched the overseer, Mr. Drage, and they took her away, her sisters trying to prevent them. She was too weak to walk and very emaciated.—Mr. Drage, the overseer, said after Martha was removed from her father's house, he took her to the "Bird in Hand" Inn, and she was carried up stairs to bed. Her body was that of a skeleton. Mr. Wright, Surgeon, of Stilton, was sent for, but Crewe, who had followed his daughter to the Inn, said he would not consent to her having medical assistance. In reply to questions put to her, the girl said her sisters used to beat her, and her father locked her clothes up.—The Rev. O. W. Davys, Rector of Stilton, said: On the 18th of August, Crewe's house was beset with a crowd. He went up with the parish constable. He could hear moans inside, and heard Martha say, "I will go away; I have not been out for three years." The constable that day broke into the house and took her away. On a former occasion a vestry meeting was called with reference to Crewe, and he, with the churchwardens, and other inhabitants, went to Crewe

and told him that if he persisted in his cruelty, they would proceed against him.—Mrs. Robinson, the landlady of the “Bird in Hand,” stated that the girl was too weak to walk, and for the first few days ate ravenously.—Mr. Wright, the surgeon, said he had examined Martha, and found her suffering from glands and scrofula, of about five years’ standing. Had she been properly treated two years ago, she would probably have recovered, but now it was doubtful. Had she continued as she was found on the 18th of August, she must have soon died. He attended her about five years ago, and sent her some cod-liver oil, but Crewe returned it, and would not allow him to attend her.—The magistrates then adjourned to the house where Martha was, and found her lying on a sofa. They took her evidence, which she gave without hesitation. She said her sisters were the most unkind, and used to knock her about. She could not run away, she was watched so, and the doors were always fast; she tried a good many times to get away but could not. She slept in the same bed with her father. She had seldom anything but dry bread to eat. It was nearly five years since she went out of the house. Two years ago she would have left home with Mr. Drage, but her sisters told her the people would trample her to dust if once they got her away. Rebecca once hit her so hard she felt it now. Her

arm was hurt by Eliza.—The three prisoners were then committed for trial at Huntingdon. The following October, at the Huntingdon quarter sessions, Edward Crewe, Eliza Crewe, and Rebecca Crewe, were charged with “unlawfully imprisoning and detaining Martha Crewe, from 13th of February, 1854, to the 18th of August, 1856, and with having assaulted and beaten her, withholding and preventing her from having sufficient food and raiment, with intent to kill and murder her.” The condition of Martha remaining very precarious, the trial was adjourned until March, 1857, when Chief Baron Pollock thought the justice of the case was met by sending the father to prison for three months, and Eliza and Rebecca for one month each. At the same assizes a man was transported for 14 years for setting a straw stack on fire; another man for stealing a fork and spoon, was sent to prison for 18 months; another for stealing a bushel of potatoes, was sentenced to eight months; but the sentence against the Crewe’s was the lightest of all.

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A GODMANCHESTER MURDER.

In 1819 a young woman of Godmanchester was foully murdered. Her name was Mary Ann Weems, and she had been brought up by her grandmother or aunt, named Sawyer, in a cottage in St. Ann’s Lane,

Godmanchester. In 1816 she married Thos. Weems, who was described as a man of strong build and of rough exterior. She was then only 18 years old, and was said to be very prepossessing in appearance. A short time after the marriage Weems deserted her, and she went back to her relative. In the meantime he formed an acquaintance with another woman, and three years ulterior to this date he visited his wife at Godmanchester, and persuaded her to accompany him, as he alleged, to London. They journeyed along the road, and entered a public-house, where they quarrelled, and on renewing their journey, he took her into a field in the parish of Wendy, Cambs., and strangled her. He was soon apprehended on a charge of murder. After the inquest the body of the woman was conveyed to Godmanchester to the house where she lived, and so great was the curiosity of the public to see the corpse that the coffin was placed in the front of the window, and the bed removed, so that anyone passing could get a view of it. Weems was tried at Cambridge assizes, and suffered the full penalty of the law in that town. His body was used for the purposes of anatomy at Cambridge. The unfortunate woman's remains were interred in Godmanchester churchyard, and a stone erected to her memory, on which the following was inscribed:—"As a warning to the young of both sexes this stone is

erected by public subscription over the remains of Mary Ann Weems, who, at an early age, became acquainted with Thomas Weems, of this parish. This connection terminated in a compulsory marriage, and he soon deserted her; and wishing to be married to another woman he filled up the measure of iniquity by resolving to murder his wife, which he barbarously perpetrated at Wendy, on their journey to London, towards which place he had induced her to go under the mask of reconciliation, May 7th, 1819. He was taken within a few hours after the crime was committed, tried, and subsequently executed at Cambridge on the 7th of August in that year.

E're crime you perpetrate survey this stone,  
Learn hence the God of Wisdom sleeps not on his  
throne,  
But marks the sinner with unerring eye,  
The suffering victim hears, and makes the guilty  
die."

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A MEMORABLE BURGLARY AT GREAT RAVELEY.

On the 23rd October, 1851, a memorable burglary was perpetrated at a lonely house called "High Holborn," near Great Raveley. Mr. Fairley, a fine specimen of the old English yeoman, and bailiff to Squire Hussey, lived in the house with his wife. On the night of the burglary, about 11 o'clock, Mr.

Fairley was aroused by a noise outside resembling thunder, and the principal door of the house fell in with a crash. The following is his own description of what ensued: "I jumped out of bed and went to the window looking into the yard. I called out, but received no answer. I turned round and got my pistol, and then saw a light at the stair-foot. My bedroom door being open, I went to the door and cried 'Beware.' The light was then withdrawn, but speedily returned, and I saw a man and fired at him. The man said, 'Oh, you keep those things, do you? we've got plenty of 'em,' and he returned the fire, but missed me. I called out to know what they wanted, as I could hear by the whispering that there was more than one. They said, 'Come down,' but I replied I would not. I said, 'Come up, two of you, you cowardly rascals, if one is afraid.' They replied that there were 10 of them, and I said, 'I don't care if there are 20 of you,' and I fired at the man I could see. They returned the fire; they fired five shots at me in all. After they had fired three times they said they would set fire to the house, but I did not think they would. They, however, lighted some bean straw, and fed the fire with the leaves of a bible, the barometer, and the clock case. The smoke nearly suffocated me. I went to the window, but found a man in charge of it with a pistol. My wife could stand it no longer,



but rushed down stairs. They pushed her in a closet and shut her in. I fired once after she went down, but one of the men shouted out, 'If you fire again we will shoot Mrs. Fairley where she stands. I was then obliged to give up calling upon them for God's sake to have mercy on my wife. There were five men in all, and all wore masks. They ordered me down stairs while they searched the house, and when they had ransacked the upper rooms, they ordered us up stairs, striking me with a poker. I said, 'You have got my property, for God's sake spare our lives.' We sat down on the edge of the bed when we got up stairs. The men enjoyed themselves in the house with liquors and wine for about 5 hours, and then left. When they had gone, I asked my wife if she dare remain alone while I went for assistance. I saddled my horse and rode to Upwood, and soon returned with the constable and other persons. The walls about the staircase were marked with the bullets as though there had been a seige." All the five men were afterwards arrested, and were punished for their crime.

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MURDER OF THE REV. J. WATERHOUSE,  
OF STUKELEY.

On the 3rd of July, 1827, a barbarous crime was committed at Little Stukeley, when the Rev. J. Waterhouse, 80 years of age, was murdered by Joshua

Slade.\* It appears that the Rev. J. Waterhouse was the rector of Little Stukeley, and of Coton in Cambridgeshire. He was M.A. and B.D., but whilst he resided at Coton charges of immorality were brought against him before the Bishop of Ely. He exhibited great eccentricity and impropriety of character. He had an insatiable love of money, which induced him to hoard up his corn in anticipation of still higher prices being realized. Upon entering the vicarage of Stukeley he fitted it up in a costly and elegant manner, but so strong was his propensity for accumulating corn, wool, etc., that the well-furnished rooms were converted into granaries, and became infested with rats and mice. Although there were 30 windows in the house, he blocked them nearly all up, so as to avoid the window tax. He dwelt alone. His only companions were the rats and mice, who consumed his corn. The men of the village disliked him because he ground them down in regard to wages, and frequently he had the mortification to see his hay and corn perish in the fields

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\* These particulars are chiefly taken from "A Sermon delivered at the Dissenting Chapel, Huntingdon, on Sunday, Sep. 2nd, 1827, by W. Wright : occasioned by the Barbarous Murder of the Rev. J. Waterhouse, of Stukeley Parva, and the execution of the confessed criminal, Joshua Slade, with a sketch of the life and character of each. Corrected and enlarged. Huntingdon : Printed and Sold by A. P. Wood, Price : One Shilling."

because no one would work for him. He is described as being tall and stout, and naturally bold and daring. He used to declare "No man shall ever conquer me." He kept a blunderbus in one of his upper rooms for his defence. His appearance was altogether unclerical, frequently wearing blue worsted stockings when he went to Huntingdon. Mr. Wright describes him as resembling "a seller of earthenware a little smarted up." He was fond of breeding horses, and was an early riser. His murderer, Joshua Slade, was a native of Great Stukeley. From an early age he was accustomed to habits of pilfering. He was allowed to grow up in ignorance of his moral obligations. From Slade's confession, which is given in Mr. Wright's pamphlet, it appears that he entered the vicarage at five in the evening without being seen, and went to sleep in the room in which the wool was stored. His snoring, however, attracted Mr. Waterhouse's attention, and he entered the room and said "Holloa! who are you?" Slade then seized him, and he tried to get to his blunderbus. Slade dragged the old man down stairs, and holding up a sword which he had brought with him said, "If you will forgive me I will forgive you, but if not, this is your death warrant." Waterhouse replied: "I will suffer anything first." The monster then proceeded to butcher the old man with the sword, and afterwards went home, had his supper, and went to bed. Suspicion

afterwards fell upon him, and he was tried at the assizes on the 30th of the same month, and condemned to death. The day fixed for his execution was the following Thursday, but when it came the event was postponed. This is how Mr. Wright speaks of it: "On the morning of this day, the whole neighbourhood was in motion and all drawing to the spot where the expected scene was to be witnessed. To a feeling mind it is painful to see the manner in which so many young persons come to an execution. Did we not know the cause of their eagerness and levity of manner we should certainly conclude they were hastening to the usual sources of dissipation, of vice, fairs, and feasts, &c. In the midst of this bustle and anxiety it was understood that his life would be spared another day, and some returned cursing the authors of their disappointment. A similar state of things was presented the following day, as it was determined to give a respite of the young man's life till the 1st of September." This extension was due to the doubts in the judge's mind of his guilt, but the culprit's confession to the chaplain removed all doubt, and he was executed. The skeleton of Slade is now in the possession of Mr. W. Bryant, of Cowper House School, Huntingdon. He purchased it at a sale of Col. F. J. Rooper's effects. It doubtless came into his possession through his grandfather, who at the time Slade was executed was High Sheriff, and claimed the body.

## Chapter XXII.

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### MEMORABLE FIRES.

In 1289, all the Jews were banished from the kingdom by a Royal proclamation, and at Huntingdon their Synagogue was burnt to the ground; all the furniture, and the library belonging, being also destroyed.

In 1731, Ramsey was visited by a very severe conflagration; a large portion of the town was entirely destroyed.

“A Dictionary of the World,” published in 1772, says of St. Ives: “This town was large and flourishing before it was unfortunately destroyed by fire, since which it has never quite recovered its former beauty.” Spencer’s complete English Traveller,” published about the same time, says:—“Some years ago it [St. Ives] suffered considerably by fire; but

all the damage has been made good, and the houses re-built more handsome than before.”

A terrible fire broke out at Overton Longueville, on the 3rd of March, 1797, which destroyed six houses, and reduced several families to very great distress.

A fire, which lasted three days, occurred at Stilton in April, 1798. It originated by a chimney catching fire, the flames from which unfortunately communicated to the adjoining houses in the west part of the town, eight of which were burned to the ground, together with the whole of Mr. Pitts' stock of hay and corn, and also some hay belonging to Mr. Sibley. By the assistance of the Leicestershire militia, with two fire engines from the barracks, the flames were stopped, though not till “all within its reach was nearly destroyed.” Three of the houses burnt were the property of Mr. Woods, grocer, three others belonged to Mr. Morchen, a carrier (who had for 15 years paid an annuity of 4/- a week to the late Mr. Mark Noble), and he had been in possession of them only about six weeks. The fire, which originated on Friday, was not extinguished until Sunday morning.

A dreadful fire broke out at Alconbury, in September, 1802. It originated at the house of Mr. Key, a butcher, by the inadvertent use of too much straw in boiling a pot, which, during the absence of a person in the house, communicated to other straw

that lay about the room, and in a few minutes set the premises in a blaze, caught a farm belonging to Mr. Martin, and entirely consumed all his out-houses and grain, part of his house, the adjoining farm of Mr. Sharp's, and five or six cottages, by which terrible accident many poor families were reduced to the greatest distress. The flames were so rapid that the conflagration was at its full extent before proper assistance could be procured.

Offord Mills, near Buckden, were burned to the ground on July 30th, 1818. The fire was caused by a lighterman leaving a candle in the stable after putting up the haling horses. The animals perished in the flames.

A young man, 21 years of age, named Thomas Savage, was sentenced to death at the Huntingdon assizes, in August, 1824, for having set fire to a barn at Somersham, the property of Martin Wellman, on the 26th of May in the same year. Savage and two other men named Woods and Cook, arranged to burn down the premises in order that they might steal something. Savage, meeting Woods, said to him: "I think I shall set fire to old Billy Mason's house—yet I think I shall not—if I set fire to Wellman's, or Ibbetts', that will spread to Leeds's tithe barn and the two large shops, and then we can make our market; if you stand at my back and hand the

old iron chests about, we shall never want any more." On the evening of the fire, Cook accompanied Savage to the barn, where they remained until one o'clock in the morning, when Savage set fire to the thatch of the barn, Cook looking on. The building was soon in a blaze, and the flames quickly spread to all the buildings between the barn and Mr. Morts' house, which was entirely destroyed. Cook and Wood afterwards turned King's evidence against Savage, who pleaded guilty and received sentence of death.

On 22nd Jan., 1830, Hinchbrook House was discovered to be on fire. The splendid bay window built by Sir Oliver Cromwell, uncle to the protector, in order to give éclat to the entertainment offered to King James, and in which were shields of the arms of the family, and of the Williams, in stained glass, was destroyed, together with the valuable carved arm chairs, models of ships of war, &c., in Queen Elizabeth's room, and other valuable property to the amount of many thousands of pounds. Fortunately the fire did not extend to the library and paintings, which are numerous and of considerable value.

The village of Woodhurst was almost entirely laid in ruins by a disastrous fire, which broke out about six o'clock on the morning of November 6th, 1834. The flames originated in a barn on the farm premises of Mr. John Fyson, which was soon destroyed, and they



then communicated to the stables, hovels, and other out-buildings, all of which were consumed. The wheat, oat, barley, and hay stacks, rapidly fell a prey to the progress of the fire, and an excessively high wind prevailing, cottages in various parts of the village were quickly set in a blaze. Singular, however, to relate, many of the cottages ignited were at a considerable distance from the origin of the fire, while straw stacks and thatched cottages comparatively close to, escaped unburnt. The cottages being thatched were quickly burned, even before the inhabitants could save their furniture. The scene rapidly became of an appalling character, as cottage after cottage was reduced to a mere heap of cinders and ashes. The inhabitants were each endeavouring to save their own property and protect their own houses, so that there was comparatively little help to be got to stop the progress of the fire, which, fanned by the gale that was blowing, was rapidly assuming gigantic proportions. The residents, however, from neighbouring villages, quickly assembled in large numbers, and by superhuman exertions about half the village was saved. After the flames had subsided the county magistrates met, and held an enquiry, from which it appeared that when the fire first broke out many of the labourers became intoxicated, and exhibited a gross carelessness as to whether the flames

spread or not, some of them having a pugilistic combat while the fire was raging. The cottages of the poor were all uninsured.

A fire, which did damage to the extent of £5,000, took place at Haddon, on November 28th, 1834. About 30 corn ricks and the farm premises of Mr. Rowles of that place were completely destroyed. The sight was said to be terrific, and attracted people from distances of 20 miles round. Several acts of plunder were committed during the progress of the flames. Mr. Rowles' housekeeper, in making her escape with a reticule containing a quantity of money, had it snatched from her hands, and articles were also stolen from the house.

On the 23rd of April, 1852, the farm labourers working for Wm. Wells, Esq., of Holme Woodhouse, were ordered to set fire to a quantity of rough sedge, for the purpose of clearing the land. During the day the flames spread beyond where they were intended, burning the ground in rapid progress, until at night the scene became alarming. Women and children dwelling in the vicinity were seen flying from their houses, and hastening to the towns and villages to obtain shelter and assistance. On the following morning it was found that the fire had extended for nearly six miles, and destroyed thousands of acres of growing wheat, oats, potatoes, and other spring-sown

corn ; besides hundreds of thousands of "turf," which were piled for fuel and intended for sale. On Sunday, the fire was not stayed, although it had originated on Friday morning, and hundreds of men were fetching water (which had become very scarce) in all directions from the ditches and drains to pour over the flames. At length their efforts were successful, and on Monday the fire had become nearly exhausted. A long tract of land, in length about seven miles, and in width about a mile and a half, running over Holme and Connington Fens, as far as the once famed Whittlesea mere, which had been then drained, and was partly in a good state of cultivation, was laid waste. The loss was computed at £20,000.



## Chapter XVIII.

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### THE WITCHES OF WARBOYS.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, trials for witchcraft were of frequent occurrence in every county in England. Up to the time of the Reformation there was little or nothing of the kind. Trials by ordeal were resorted to at times, but they had been always discountenanced and discouraged by the ecclesiastical authorities, and by means of condemnations of such practices by several of the Sovereign Pontiffs, by the 14th century they had become almost entirely abandoned. But the Reformation brought with it a return to many of the most degrading and extravagant forms of superstition, and thus, in a few years, all the good work which it had previously taken centuries to accomplish, was undone. Belief in witchcraft became popular

and wide spread. It was encouraged and fostered not only by the heads of the government, but also by the leaders of the new religion. During the Commonwealth, it is stated that 40,000 women were executed in England as witches. Men made it a profession to hunt out and bring to justice—or rather execution—old women and young girls, on charges of sorcery and witchcraft. One of these, Matthew Hopkins, who has been described as “the celebrated witchfinder,” published a statement in 1648, of his exploits, and in this pamphlet he declares that he was the means of discovering and hurrying to execution, no less than 200 witches in Huntingdonshire, the Isle of Ely, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire, &c. Annual sermons were established in various places to be preached against witchcraft. One of these was annually preached at Huntingdon until the present century. An agreement is still preserved in the archives of the Huntingdon Corporation, made between the Corporation and Queen’s College, Cambridge. It bears the date Sep: 28. 1593, and it provides that the Corporation shall pay to the Queen’s College, the sum of £40, in order that a sermon against witchcraft should be preached in All Saints’ church, Huntingdon, upon each Lady Day. The sermon was to be preached by a Doctor or Bachelor of Divinity, who was “to inveigh and preach against

sorcery, for which he should have 40/-, but should distribute to the poor 10/- thereof." The witch sermon was annually preached for about 200 years after its institution, and was allowed to fall into disuse about the year 1814. Its founder was Sir Henry Cromwell, the husband of Lady Cromwell, who is alleged to have been bewitched by the Samuel family, of Warboys, dying 15 months after having been so bewitched. When the three witches were executed, their goods were forfeited to Sir Henry, who was Lord of the Manor of Warboys, and were estimated to be of the value of £40. Sir Henry handed this sum over to the Corporation, on condition that a sermon against witchcraft should be preached as stated.

"The witches of Warboys,\* as the unfortunate family of the Samwells have been denominated by the credulous votaries of a rank and debasing superstition, occupy a distinguished page in the bloody annals of witchcraft. These miserable victims to popular delusion, were John Samwell, Alice, his wife, and Ann, their daughter, all of whom, in defiance of common sense, and in the absence of all rational evidence, were publicly tried and executed. Their history, as given at length in a pamphlet of the time,

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\* Brayley's *Huntingdonshire*, 503.

furnishes a memorable instance of the infatuated credulity in regard to witchcraft, which at that period possessed even the superior ranks of the community ; and shows how strongly the human intellect may be fettered by prejudice and folly. The title of the narrative, as re-printed in London, in 1693, is as follows : ‘The most strange and admirable *Discoverie* of the three witches of Warboys, arraigned, convicted, and executed, at Huntingdon, in this county, for the bewitching the five daughters of Robert Throckmorton, Esquire, and divers other Persons, with sundrie devilish and grievous Torments ; and also for bewitching *unto Death*, the Lady Cromwell : the like hath not been heard of in this Age.’ It will be seen from the opening of the narrative, that the whole of the dreadful business sprung from the observation of a child.

“About the tenth of November, 1589, Mistress Jane, one of the daughters of Master Throckmorton, being near the age of ten years, fell upon the sodaine (sudden) into a strange kind of sickness, the manner whereof was as followeth. Sometimes she would sneeze very loude and thicke for the space of halfe an houre together, and presently as one in a swoone lay quietly as long ; sometimes she would shake one leg, and no other part of her as if the palesie had been in it ; sometimes the other : presently she would

shake one of her arms, and then the other. In this manner she had continued to be affected for several days, but without any suspicion of witchcraft, when old Alice Samuel came to visit the sick child, and sat down by the side of her in the chimney corner, having a black knit cap on her head. This the childe soon observed, and pointing at her exclaimed: 'Grandmother, look where the olde witch sittethe: did you ever see one more like a witch than she is? Take off her blacke thrub'd cap, for I cannot abide to look at her.' The child afterwards became worse, and Dr. Barrow, a man well known to be excellent skilful in phisicke, being applied to, repeatedly tried the effect of his prescriptions without success, and then said, that 'he had had some experience of the malice of some witches, and he verily thought that there was some kind of sorcerie and witchcraft wrought towards this child.' Exactly one month afterwards more of the daughters were seized with the same malady and complained in the same manner of Mother Samuel. Six of the servants also who were at different periods afflicted in a similar way brought the same kind of charge against the now strongly reputed witch, who was reported to be confederated with some familiar spirits, whose visits to her were usually paid in the form of dun chickens.

"Just before the ensuing Christmas, one of the



children was attacked with a more violent fit than it had yet experienced, and 'was threatened by the spirit with one still more terrible,' though at the same time Mother Samuel, who was present, was so 'affected at the sight that she prayed many times that she might never see the like again in any of them.' The children then entreated her to confess that they might be well, and keep a merry Christmas; and their father also seconded their entreaties, but in vain. He then requested her to charge the spirit, that his daughter might escape the fit, with which she was threatened, on which she presently said 'I charge thee spirit in the name of God, that Mistress Jane never have this fit.' And again at the father's request, the old woman charged the spirit in the same manner to leave all the children immediately and never to return there again. 'Scarce had she uttered these words, before three of them, who were then in their fits, and had so continued for the space of three weeks, wiped their eyes and instantly stood upon their legges.' This event appears to have surprised the old woman herself, who immediately fell upon her knees, and entreating Mr. Throckmorton to forgive her confessed that she was the cause of all his children's troubles; and on the following day she publicly confirmed this confession in the church. She was then permitted to go home; but her reflections, when in the midst of her family,

assumed their natural tone, and she denied everything which before she had been induced to acknowledge. This being communicated to Mr. Throckmorton, he threatened to take her before the Justices; and on her steadily persisting in her innocence, he gave the constables a charge both of her and of Agnes her daughter, and on the same day they were taken before the Bishop of Lincoln at Buckden. Here on her different examinations she was led to confess that 'a dun chicken did frequently suck on her chin before it came to Mr. Throckmorton's house, and that the ill and trouble which had come to his children, had come by the means of the said dun chicken, that she knew that the said dun chicken had gone from the children, because it was come with the rest unto her, and they were then in her bellie, and made her so full that she could scant lace her coat; and that on the way as she came, they weighed so heavy that the horse she rid on did fall downe, and was not able to carrie her.' These insane ravings with many others of similar import, were thought sufficient by the sapient prelate, and two Justices, his assistants, to warrant her committal to the gaol at Huntingdon, together with her daughter, against whom as yet there appears to have been no specific charge.

"Previous to these latter events however the children were visited by the lady of Sir Henry Cromwell, and

she had not been long with them, when they fell into their usual fits, 'an occurrence which invariably took place when any strangers came to see them.' 'Whereupon she caused Mother Samuel to be sent for: and taking her aside she charged her deeply with this witchcraft, using also some hard speeches to her; but she stiffly denied all, saying 'That Master Throckmorton and his wife did her much wrong so to blame her without cause.' Lady Cromwell unable to prevail with her by good speeches, sodainly pulled off her kercher, and taking a pair of sheeres, clipped off a locke of her haire, and gave it privately to Mistress Throckmorton to burn; upon which Mother Samuel in resentment, operated upon Lady Cromwell, bewitching her in like manner. Her Ladyship's fits were much like to the children's; and that saying of Mother Samuel's 'Madam I never hurt you as yet' was never out of her mind.'

"At the quarter sessions following the committal of the girl and her mother, Mr. Throckmorton requested the High Sheriff and the Justice to suffer him to 'baile this maide, and to have her home to his house, to see whether any such evidences of guiltiness would appear against her as had before appeared in the children against the mother.' After some demur this was consented to. And within a few days after Agnes Samuel had accompanied him home 'the

children fell all of them into their fits, and then the spirits did begin as plainly to accuse the daughter as ever they did the mother, and to tell the children that the old woman hath set over her spirits to her daughter, and that she had bewitched them all over agayne.'

"On the suggestions of the spirits various proofs of the guilt of the hapless girl were afterwards tried, and as the narrative affirms, always with 'instant success' as was 'repeatedly proved by different people, and even by the Judge himself, the day before the trial of the culprits.' One of these was a charm or formula, conceived in the following words: 'I charge thee, Devil, as I am a witch, and a worser witch than my mother, and consenting to the death of Lady Cromwell, that thou suffer this child to be well at present.' Encouraged as it were by the attention paid to their remarks 'the spirits now began to accuse the father, John Samuel, as they had before done the mother and daughter, and appealed to similar charges in attestation of the truth of their accusation,' but from the perversity of circumstances, and the 'obstinaey of the old man' this was only once proved previous to the trial of the three delinquents."

"On the 5th of April, 1593, these three wicked offenders were arraigned before Mr. Justice Tanner for the bewitching of the Lady Cromwell to death ;

and for bewitching of Mistress Joane Throckmorton, Mistress Jane Throckmorton, and others; when Master Dorrington, Doctor of Divinitie, and Parson of the toun of Warboys; Thomas Neet, Master of Arts, and vicar of Ellington; the father of these afflicted children, and others of their relations, appeared as evidence against them. By these the before related proofs, presumptions, circumstanees, and reasons, with many others of the same species, were at large delivered, until both the Judge, Justices, and Jury, said openly that the cause was most apparent, and that their consciences were well satisfied that the sayed witches were guiltie, and had deserved death. During the trial Mistress Throckmorton was brought into court, and there in her fit was unable to speak, or to see any one, though her eyes were open, till old Samuel, intimidated by the threat of the judge, that if he persisted in his refusal to pronounce the charm 'the court would hold him guiltie of the crimes whereof he was accused,' said in the hearing of all that were present: 'As I am a witch and did consent to the death of Ladie Cromwell, so I charge thee Devil to suffer Mistress Jane to come out of her fit at this present;' which words were no sooner spoken by the old witch, but the said Mistress Jane, as her accustomed order was wiped her eyes, and came out of her fit."

“On such puerile and contemptible evidence,” continues Brayley, “were these ill fated beings adjudged guilty, and condemned to die. At the place of execution, the mother, who was nearly eighty years old, and whose faculties were impaired by age, and still further by the brutal reasonings of those who had supported the accusations of witchcraft, ‘confessed her guilt,’ and asserted that her husband was her associate in ‘these wicked proceedings;’ at the same time she strongly exculpated her daughter. The father resolutely denied the charge against him, and the daughter with equal warmth protested her own innocence; but ‘being willed to say the Lord’s Prayer and creed, when as she stood upon the ladder ready to be executed, she said the Lord’s Prayer, until she came to say, ‘but deliver us from evil,’ the which she could by no means pronounce,’ and in the creed, she missed very much, and could not say that she believed ‘in the Catholic Church.’”

The following particulars of the trial and execution are extracted from Dr. Hutchinson’s *Historical Essay concerning Witchcraft*. “Three persons, old Samuel and his wife, and Agnes Samuel, their daughter, were condemned at Huntingdon by Mr. Justice Fenner April 4, 1593, for bewitching as was supposed, five of Mr. Throgmorton’s children, seven servants, the Lady Cromwell, and the gaoler’s man &c. The father

and daughter indeed maintained their innocence to the last ; but the old woman confessed. It ought to be observed that this prosecution was not founded upon any previous acts of sorcery that these people had been taken in, but upon experiments and charms which the prosecutors compelled them to use, and tried upon them.

“One of Mr. Throgmorton’s daughters had fits and was ill ; but there were no signs or thoughts of witchcraft, till this Old Mother Samuel living near them, came in to see her, and set in the chimney corner, with a black knit cap on her head ; and when the child in her fit saw her, she said she looked like an old witch, and from that time took a fancy that she had bewitched her. And after that the other children had the same fears and fancies, and fits like hers. After this the Lady Cromwell to whose husband these Samuels were tenants, came to Mr. Throgmorton’s house. She sent for the old woman and called her a witch, and abused her, and pulled off her kercher, and cut off some of her grey hair, and gave it to Mrs. Throgmorton to burn for a charm. At night this lady—as very likely she should after such an ill-day’s work—dreamt of Mother Samuel and her cat, and fell into fits ; and about a year and a quarter after died. It was stated further in the trial, that there were nine spirits (or familiars) that belonged to

these people, and called Mother Samuel their old dame. Two of their names I have forgot, but the other seven were Pluck, Hardname, Catch, three Smacs (that were cousins), and Blew. The children were said to talk with these spirits in their fits. The standers by however never saw any shapes, nor heard any voices, but only understood what the spirits said by the children's answers, and by what the children told them afterwards. The following is a specimen of one of these delectable dialogues : it took place between the familiar, Smac, and Mistress Joan, the eldest daughter of Mr. Throgmorton, about sixteen years of sge.

“ Mistress Joan : From whence come you, Mr. Smac, and what news do you bring ?

“ Smac : I come from fighting.

“ Mistress Joan : With whom, I pray ?

“ Smac : With Pluck.

“ Mistress Joan : Where did you fight, I pray ?

“ Smac : In my old dame's bakehouse (which is an old house standing in old mother Samuel's yard), and we fought with great cowl staves last night.

“ Mistress Joan : And who got the mastery, I pray ?

“ Smac : I did, for I broke Pluck's head.

“ Mistress Joan : I would that he had broke your head also.



“Smac : Is this all the thanks I shall get for my labour.

“Mistress Joan : Why do you look for thanks at my hands ? I would you were all hanged up one against the other, and dame and all, for you are all naught, but it is no matter. I do not well to curse you, for God, I trust, will defend me from you all.”

“The old woman confessed ; but, I pray take notice how her confession was drawn from her. For about 2 years after the first accusation, she maintained her innocence strictly, and said they were wanton children. But by long ill-usage, her husband on one side swearing at and beating her ; and on the other side Mr. Throgmorton and the children, scratching and playing unfair tricks, and keeping her from her own house amongst his children ; for, contrary to all other cases, her presence was their preservation : I reckon her health was so impaired, that one night she was vapoured to that degree, that they thought the Devil was in her. Then observe how very forcibly they drew her confession from her. The children with tears begged that she would confess. They said they should be well if she confessed, and they would forgive her from the bottom of their hearts ; and besides that they would entreat their parents and friends, so much as in them lay, clearly to forgive and forget all that had passed. Still this would not

do. She would not confess, she said, what was not true. But Mr. Throgmorton prevailed upon her to charge the spirit in the name of God that they might have no more fits. She yielded to him and then the children grew well. This surprised the poor woman and very likely made her believe, that all had proceeded from her ill-tongue; and having been told so often, that if she would but confess, all would be well, and they forgive her, she cried and confessed; but in a day or two she denied all again. Then Mr. Throgmorton was angry, and threatened to carry her before the Bishop of Bugden; and upon condition that she might not be carried thither, she promised to confess again, provided that it might be to Mr. Throgmorton alone; but he secretly placed men under the window to hear what she said; and by this threatening promise and contrivance, he gained a second confession.”\*

“But this confession was not sufficient for the tender and scrupulous conscience of Mr. Throgmorton. He, consequently, invented a charm, which he declared had been revealed to him by spirits; and so great was the influence he had gained over the mind of this poor old woman, that he made her repeat it ‘a hun-

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\* The remainder of the story is taken from Mr. Carruthers' *History of Huntingdon*, in which the extract from Hutchinson is quoted.

dred times over.' It was as follows: 'I charge thee, thou Devil, as I love thee, and have authority over thee, and am a witch, and guilty of this matter, that thou suffer these children to be well at present.' The children for whose benefit this damning exhortation was uttered, had the faculty it appears, of immediately recovering from their indisposition, so soon as they heard this invocation; and it seems very evident from a narrative of this trial, published the same year, that these children of Mr. Throgmorton's were nothing more nor less than a pack of malicious and wicked impostors, instigated, no doubt by their father, for some purpose best known to himself. The writer of the narrative who was clearly no friend of the delinquents, confesses with much naivete that the children would 'come out of their fits' at many other absurd experiments, as 'carrying them abroad or into the church yard, or even turning their faces one way rather than another.' It appears, however, that these urchins never failed to display their pretended afflictions in the presence of strangers, and that they derived a great deal of pleasure from the wonderment of those silly persons who believed all they saw and heard.

"The Judge (Fenner) seems also to have been fully determined upon the destruction of this ill-fated family. Old Samuel sturdily declared his innocence, and as no positive proof of his guilt had appeared in

evidence against him, this precious expounder of the law told him, that, 'if he would not speak the words of the charm the court would hold him guilty of the crime, he was accused of;' and thus this poor old man was urged to a confession, which, untrue and unjust as it was, occasioned his condemnation and death! A circumstance occurred during the trial, which ought to have convinced everybody of the innocence of the daughter, Agnes Samuel. This young girl seems to have been a girl of more than usual virtue and intelligence. The only crime of which she was guilty, was hiding herself when the officers came to apprehend her; and repeating, by compulsion, the damnatory charm already pronounced by her father and mother. She strenuously maintained her innocence to the last; and some persons near her advised her, as the only means of prolonging and perhaps of preserving her life, to plead that she was with child. But she heard the proposal with indignation and replied: 'No, I will never do that. It shall never be said that I am both a witch and a ——.' But even this honourable resolution had no effect upon the bigoted minds of her accusers, nothing but the death of herself and her aged parents, would satisfy their bloodthirsty persecutors; and the parents and their child were consequently executed at Huntingdon a few days after their condemnation."

## Chapter XVIII.

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### LYNCHING A WITCH AT GREAT PAXTON.

The following circumstances are related by the Rev. Isaac Nicholson, of Great Paxton, under date, July 25th, 1808 :—

“In the afternoon of Wednesday, the 17th of February last [1808], Alice Brown, a young woman of Great Paxton, imprudently ventured to cross the ice, which then covered the surface of the Ouse. A thaw of some hours had rendered the ice unsafe, and she had not walked many yards upon it before it gave way, and let her into the river. From this perilous situation she providentially extricated herself and reached the opposite bank, where her friend, Fanny Amey, scarcely less terrified than herself at what had happened, stood anxiously waiting for her. Shivering and frightened she hastened to her father’s house,

about a quarter of a mile from the river, and almost as soon as she entered it, was seized with a strong epileptic fit. Fanny Amey had been subject to epilepsy for some months previous to this period, and therefore it is not at all surprising that she should be sympathetically affected, and fall into similar convulsions.

“Alice Brown did not speedily get over the effects of her fright : her distressing fits returned at short intervals and disqualified her for every kind of work; indeed she was so much reduced by them that her friends began to despair of her recovery. Inquiring after the state of her health on the 6th of April, I was astonished and grieved to hear from her mother that her fits, weakness, and dejection were ascribed to the effect of witchcraft. ‘She is under an ill-tongue,’ said the youth. ‘As sure as you are alive, sir,’ continued a man who stood by, ‘she is bewitched, and so are two other girls that live near her. There is a mau in the town I came from in Bedfordshire, who was exactly like Alice Brown—he could do no work, lost all his strength, and was wasting away very fast, when a person told him what was the matter with him and how he might be cured. He filled a bottle with a particular kind of fluid, stuffed the cork both top and bottom with pins, set it carefully in an oven of a moderate heat, and then observed a profound

silence. In a few minutes the charm succeeded ; for, he saw a variety of forms flitting before his eyes, and amongst the rest the perfect resemblance of an old woman who lived in the same parish. This was what he wanted—he was now satisfied who it was that had injured him, and that her reign would soon be over. The woman whose figure he saw died in a few days, and the man immediately recovered. Thomas Brown tried this charm last night for his daughter, and though a strange noise was distinctly heard twice by his wife, who was in bed with the poor girl, it did not succeed according to our wishes ; so they have not at present found out, who it is that does all the mischief.’

“If I was shocked at this man’s absurdity and superstition, I was infinitely more so to understand it was the general opinion of the people, that Alice Brown, Fanny Amey, and Mary Fox were certainly bewitched by some person, who had purchased a familiar, or an evil spirit of the Devil, at the expense of his own soul ; and that a variety of charms and experiments had been tried to discover who it was.

“When the public service was over, I called on Fanny Amey and Alice Brown. It was not in my power to judge from the countenance of the former, that anything was the matter with her ; she was perfectly collected and looked the picture of health.

Alice Brown was asleep in bed, and therefore I did not see her. At both houses I endeavoured to explain to the relatives and friends of the young women, that it was an utter impossibility for one human creature to injure the health of another by any invisible and preternatural process,—entreated them to discountenance notions so wild and irrational, and begged them to try other means than senseless charms to recover their children.

“A few minutes before I went into Church on the following Sunday, Ann Izzard, a poor woman of Great Paxton, requested leave to speak with me. In tears and greatly agitated she told me her neighbours pretended they had discovered by means of certain charms that she was a witch, and blamed her for the fits and illness of Alice Brown, Fanny Amey, and Mary Fox: she said, they threatened to punish her, abused her children, and frightened her so much that she frequently dropped on the ground in fainting fits; and concluded with asserting her innocence in these words:—‘I am not a witch, and am willing to prove it by being weighed against the church bible.’

“Ann Izzard is a little woman, about sixty years of age, and by no means ill looking: she has had eight children; five are now living.

“After the sermon I addressed the congregation upon the subject, pointed out the folly of their



opinions, that fatal consequences might result from brooding over them and tried to persuade them, that, although they might be weak enough to suppose there was no harm in laying violent hands on a woman, they madly called a witch, yet the laws of their country would view their conduct in a very different light.

“But argument, explanation, and remonstrance, were in vain ; the mania had taken full possession of them, and was only to be cured, or restrained by the powerful arm of the law.

“On Thursday, 5th of May, Ann Izzard was at St. Neots market ; and it so happened that her son, about sixteen years old, was sent the same day to St. Neots by his master, a respectable farmer, John Bidwell, of Great Paxton, for a load of corn. When he returned his mother and another woman accompanied him. Contrary to the better advice of her neighbour, the latter insisted upon putting a basket of grocery upon the top of the sacks of corn. One of the horses which drew the cart was young and unmanageable, and on going down the hill which leads into the village of Paxton, by his plunging and restiveness, overturned it. By this unfortunate accident, the shopkeeper’s grocery was materially damaged ; and, because Ann Izzard had repeatedly advised her not to put the basket upon the sacks, she charged her

with overturning the cart by means of her infernal art, on purpose to spoil her goods. It will scarcely be credited that in an hour after, the whole parish was in an uproar: 'She has just overturned a loaded cart, with as much ease as if it had been a spinning wheel,' was echoed from one end of it to the other. Men, women, and children, raised their voices, and exclaimed, 'we have now proof positive of her guilt—this last act in open day speaks for itself—she is the person that does all the mischief, and if something is not done to put a stop to her baseness, there will be no living in the place.' Nor did this extraordinary fit of frenzy terminate till they had made two attacks upon her, which, atrocious as they appear to me, are considered by themselves as not only justifiable, but highly meritorious. The dark and uninstructed Caffrarian would look upon such actions as a perpetual scandal to himself and an everlasting disgrace to his country.

"A considerable number of people assembled together as it grew dark on Sunday evening, the 8th of May, and taking with them the young women ridiculously supposed to be bewitched, about ten o'clock proceeded to the cottage of Wright Izzard, which stands alone, at some distance from the body of the village. When they arrived at this solitary spot, so favourable for the execution of their villainous

designs, they broke into the poor man's house, dragged his wife out of bed, and threw her naked into the yard; where her arms were torn with pins, her head was dashed against the large stones of the causeway—and her face, stomach, and breast, were severely bruised with a thick stick that served as a bar to the door. Having thus satiated themselves the mob dispersed. The woman then crawled into the house, put her clothes on, and went to the constable, who said, 'he could not protect her, because he was not sworn.' The humanity, protection, and assistance which she could not find at the constable's, very happily for herself, she found under the roof of a poor widow. The compassionate and honest Alice Russel unlocked her door at the first call, wrapped up her neighbour's bleeding arms with the nicest linen rags she had, affectionately sympathised with and comforted her, and gave her a bed. But with the deepest grief I relate it, the compassion and kindness of this poor woman, were the means of shortening her days. 'The protectors of a witch are just as bad as the witch and deserve the same treatment,' cried the infatuated populace the next morning. The envenomed shaft flew direct to its mark, and, the widow Russel, neither eat nor slept again: she died a martyr to fear and apprehension on Friday, the 20th of May.

“In the evening of Monday, the 9th of May, Ann

Izzard was a second time dragged out of her house, and a second time were her arms torn with pins till they streamed afresh with blood. Alive the next morning, and apparently likely to survive this attack also, her enemies resolved to have her ducked, as soon as the labour of the day was over. On hearing this she hastily quitted her home, and took refuge in a neighbouring village, where their inhumanity and malevolence could not reach her."

Two years later, in 1810, Mr. Nicholson published : "An abstract of the proceedings laid against Joseph Harper, James Slaughton, Thomas Braybrook, Mary Amey, Fanny Amey, Alice Brown, Edward Briers, Mary Hook, and Mary Fox, for assaulting Ann Izzard, of Great Paxton, in the county of Huntingdon, on the 8th and 9th of May, 1808, under the pretence of her being a witch." There were two indictments, the prisoners being first tried at the Huntingdon assizes, and afterwards at the court of King's Bench, at Westminster, on November 23rd, 1809. On the latter occasion, Mr. Justice Grose, in passing sentence upon the prisoners, said : "You are each of you to receive the sentence of this court, convicted of an outrageous and alarming misdemeanour, in riotously assembling and breaking into the dwelling house,—breaking open the doors, and in truth, bursting into the house of Wright Izzard, for the purpose of

seizing and possessing, by force and violence, and afterwards assaulting, Ann his wife, in which force and violence you dragged her from her bed—pierced her hands, arms, and other parts of her person, with pins and other sharp instruments, and wounding her in a most painful manner, and creating a great disturbance in the neighbourhood, and behaving in a most outrageous manner . . . . It appears that some of you held the husband, Wright Izzard, while others of you assaulted the wife, and with pins and other instruments, you pricked, goaded, and wounded her arms, and injured other parts of her person, and that so cruelly, that, to use the language of a witness, ‘her arms were all over in a gore of blood.’ . . . At the trial this ill-used woman, the prosecutrix, demeaned herself most properly ; and from her conduct then, I should have imagined her to be a sober, discreet, and intelligent woman. Her evidence was given with propriety and temper, and it appeared that her only wish was, to get protection against force and violence, a protection which it is the right of every subject in this country to have. Your crimes call for the sentence of the law, nor can the justice of the country be satisfied without marking this breach of the peace as a great outrage upon an inoffending individual, and it is impossible to pass this offence unpunished. Therefore to protect the prosecutrix

against future violence, and to preserve the public peace, and also to fix in your minds, proper principles of humanity and a ready obedience to the law, as well as to protect the character of the prosecutrix, and to enforce that which the law and justice of the country demand, the court, having taken into consideration all the circumstances of the case, doth order and adjudge, that for this your offence, you and each of you, be imprisoned in the common jail of Huntingdon, for one calendar month; and that you, Edward Briers, Mary Hook, and Mary Fox, convicted of a similar offence on the 7th day of May, you and each of you, be imprisoned in the common jail, of Huntingdon, for one calendar month—and that you, James Staughton (convicted in a second indictment) be imprisoned in the same jail for another calendar month, to commence at the expiration of the first imprisonment.”

In addition to this, they were each ordered to find security for their good behaviour for two years, or be further imprisoned until such security should be given. But all this did not quite put a stop to the evil, for on the 16th of October, 1809, Ann Izzard appeared before Henry Pointer Standley, Esq., J.P., of Little Paxton, and lodged a complaint against a mother and her daughter named Day, for assaulting her. In default of finding bail for their good behaviour, they were sent to Huntingdon jail.

## Chapter XXX.

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### FABRICATED EXECUTIONS FOR WITCHCRAFT AT HUNTINGDON.

The following is extracted from the History of Huntingdon, by "R. C." [Mr. Carruthers]:—"In the year 1646, (Charles I.) several persons fell victims in Huntingdon, to the absurd and abominable superstition of witchcraft. The names of two of these wretched sufferers were Elizabeth Weed and John Winwick." "A tragical story," says Mr. Gough, "we have in the whole trial and examination of Mrs. Mary Hicks, and her daughter Elizabeth, but nine years of age, who were condemned at the last assizes held at Huntingdon, for witchcraft, and there executed the 28th July, 1716. With an account of the most surprising pieces of witchcraft they played whilst under their diabolical compact, the like was

never heard of before: their behaviour with several divines, who came to converse with them whilst under the sentence of death, and last dying speeches and confession at the place of execution.—A substantial farmer apprehends his wife and favourite child, the latter for some silly illusions practised on his weakness, the former for the antiquated folly of killing her neighbour in effigy; and Judge Powell suffers them to be hanged on their own confession, four years after his wiser brother had ventured his own life to save that of an old woman at Hertford.”

There are, however, very strong reasons to believe that this story is an entire fabrication. The pamphlet which is supposed to record all the particulars is not now in existence, or if it is, it has escaped the attention of all the local collectors. Lord Esmé Gordon's library, one of the finest Huntingdonshire collections in England, contains no copy of it. The Rev. E. Bradley (“Cuthbert Bede”), who has been a collector of matters relating to Huntingdonshire for upwards of 40 years, has stated\* that he has never yet been able to find one, and a descendant of Judge Powell, who is alleged to have passed sentence of death on the alleged witches, also declares that, although he has taken every means to ascertain the

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\* Letter to *Peterborough Advertiser*, July 20th, 1885.



existence of such a pamphlet, he has never seen one, nor has he found any one else who ever had.

But the story itself, as related, when closely criticised, leaves little doubt that it is an entire fabrication. There were three judges of the name of Powell, the last of whom is referred to as having tried and condemned Mrs. Hicks and her daughter, on their own confession, on the 28th of July, 1716. This, however, is an impossibility, for in 1716 there was no Judge Powell living! The last judge of that name died in 1713. Therefore, there is to start with, this serious discrepancy, either Mrs. Hicks and her daughter were not executed in 1716 or Judge Powell was not the judge. No two dates are given, but in two different accounts another judge is mentioned in lieu of Judge Powell, but it does not help the matter. The other judge is said to have been Mr. Justice Wilmot. But the same objection applies to this also, for in 1716 there was no Mr. Justice Wilmot. He was not created a judge until several years after 1716.

The date is furthermore a very good reason for doubting the accuracy of the story, for every one knows that after the commencement of the 18th century there were no judicial executions for witchcraft, and the date assigned is within the reign of George I. It may, however, afford an explanation, that about that time, and more especially in the previ-

ous reign, there were swarms of unprincipled pamphleteers, who wrote only from sordid motives, and as often as not invented the circumstances which they related.

At all events, before the trial and execution of the Hicks's family can be accepted as historically true, much stronger evidence than has yet been alleged in support of it will have to be produced.



## Chapter XX.

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### THE FAIRY MORGANA.

What may be called a Huntingdonshire Fairy Morgana is recorded to have taken place near St. Neots in 1820. The real Fata Morgana is the appearance of spectral ships on the sea, and is due to reflective peculiarities in the atmosphere. I have only an indirect description of the phenomena said to have been witnessed at St. Neots; it is stated to have been similar to phenomena which occurred on Souterfell in 1743 and 1744. On referring to this I obtain the following: "On the 23rd of June, 1744, about 7 o'clock in the evening, a number of persons witnessed a troop of horsemen riding apparently on the side of Souterfell, in pretty close ranks, and at a brisk pace. The spectres became visible at a place called Knott, and advanced in regular troops along the side

of the fell, till they came opposite Blake Hills, when they passed over the mountain after describing a kind of curvilinear path. They moved at a regular, swift, and walking pace, and were watched for upwards of two hours, during which time it is alleged they were visible, the approach of darkness at length concealing them from view. Many troops were seen in succession, and frequently the last but one in a troop quitted his position, and galloped to the front and took up the same pace with the rest. The number of persons who saw this spectral army amounted to about 26, and the attestation of the facts signed by two of the party bears date, 21st July, 1785."

In the previous year "on a fine summer's evening a singular meteorous appearance was observed on Souterfell. It resembled the figure of a man with a dog in pursuit of horses, running at a rapid pace till they got out of sight at the other end of the fell. On the following morning, two men ascended the mountain in full expectation of finding the man dead, and of picking up some of the horses shoes, which they thought must have been cast while galloping at such a furious pace, but no traces of man or horse could be found. Indeed the place is so exceedingly steep that a horse could scarcely travel on it at all."

I have referred to these matters at length, because the phenomena witnessed at St. Neots is said to have

been similar to them, but no further details are given. There are records of spectral troops and persons being seen near Stockton in the Forest, Yorkshire, in 1792, and at Harrogate, on June 28th, 1812.

Whenever such things have been seen the common people have attributed them to supernatural agencies, and this may have given rise to the number of legends which exist, not only in all parts of England, but on the Continent, of spectral troops and spectral horsemen. It may be that the atmosphere of the county of Huntingdon has reflective qualities peculiarly its own, for it is stated in the *Peterborough Advertiser*, that a mirage was witnessed at Fletton, in 1885.

Possibly the spectral huntsmen at Wilton castle, in Durham, and the headless horses drawing a carriage up the hill at Dalby, in Northumberland, may have had their origin in a "Fairy Morgana." Similar legends prevail in Warwickshire, and at Caistor castle, in Norfolk. At Lindisfarne, they speak of a spectral troop of "goatriders, cowled, black, short, and hideous, with gibing faces."



## Chapter XXX.

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### QUEEN CATHARINE & KIMBOLTON CASTLE.

The Christian world was celebrating the great festival of the Epiphany, in the year 1536, when Lady Willoughby started from London to ride along the road, infested with robbers, into Huntingdonshire. The reason of her journey was that Queen Catharine, the true and lawful wife of Henry VIII., was lying *in extremis*, in Kimbolton Castle, and Lady Willoughby, a former attendant of Her Majesty, had been commissioned by the contemptible Henry to visit her. Lady Willoughby was a Spaniard by birth, with a heart full of love for the Queen, and full of indignation at the wrongs which had been heaped upon her. She no sooner heard of the Queen's illness than, disregarding all formalities, braving all dangers, she journeyed along dangerous and almost impassable



KIMBOLTON CASTLE.





roads until she arrived within sight of Kimbolton Castle. At that time it was "a very strong place in a cross country valley, guarding the road from St. Neots into the north-west and from Bedford to Huntingdon, a house buried in wood, with an open upland to the east and west, each knoll of which was crowned with either abbey tower or village spire. It was a green bright country, full of deer and birds, and fen waterfowl, but open to the marsh winds, and asking for its dwellers, who would keep in health, a good deal of exercise on horse and foot." It was at the principal gate of this castle that Lady Willoughby knocked for admittance. But Sir Edmund Bedingfield, who, with Sir Edward Chamberlain, had been appointed one of the keepers of the injured Queen, required the King's authority, for he had been commissioned to admit no one to the castle except they brought with them a written authority from the bigamous King. Lady Willoughby had no such authority. If she had ever had it, in her haste to get beside her beloved mistress, she had come away without it. What was Sir Edmund Bedingfield to do? Night was fast closing around. He could not turn Lady Willoughby away, and leave her to find her way back to London as best she could. He resolved to risk the King's displeasure, and admitted her to Queen Catharine's chamber.

Shortly after this Cardinal Chappius, bearing with him the King's written authority arrived, and he also was admitted to the Queen's apartments. The visitors at once perceived that the good, the beautiful, the pious, the Catholic Catharine was fast sinking. The Cardinal hastened to give her all the consolatory rites and privileges of the venerable church of which he was a minister. He stayed by her side rendering her all the aid in his power to assist her in her last agony. He heard her confession, gave her absolution, gave her the holy viaticum of the Body and Blood of Christ, gave her extreme unction, anointing her as the holy Scriptures say the ministers of the Christian church should anoint the sick with holy oil accompanied by prayer, and Queen Catharine expired amid the tears of her beloved attendants, the Cardinal, Lady Willoughby, and her two keepers, Sir Edward Chamberlain and Sir Edmund Bedingfield.

She had not dwelt long at Kimbolton Castle—only two short years. When King Henry put her away from him,\* she went to live at Buckden palace, built after

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\*Henry's plea was that she had been the *wife* of his Brother Arthur, and his conscience was too delicate to allow him to remain her husband. The canon law forbids a man to marry his deceased brother's wife. There was, however, the clearest proof that Catharine's marriage with Arthur, who had died at the age of 14, had never been consummated, therefore in the

the style of Hampton Court, but she afterwards desired a different residence. Three places were offered her, one was Fotheringhay Castle—which had not then been stained by the blood of another Catholic Queen—a second was the palace of the Bishop of Ely at Somersham, and the third was Kimbolton Castle. It is perhaps difficult to say why she selected Kimbolton. But having selected it, she removed there in 1533, with such of her attendants and servants as Henry allowed her to retain.

Shortly before her death she begged that she might see her daughter Mary. It was the dying request of a mother to see her only child. King Henry had the inhuman cruelty to deny his wife this last request, and she died without seeing her child. She had begged that she might be buried in one of the churches of the Observantine Monks, but Henry disregarded this request also, and her remains were removed to Peterborough Cathedral. A plain slab, with

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strict sense of the word she had never been the *wife* of the King's brother. Upon this evidence—and it must have been conclusive to have satisfied the Sovereign Pontiff—a dispensation was issued and the marriage between Henry and Catharine took place. "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The Pope cannot and does not claim to grant dispensations from the Divine law. It was therefore impossible for him to accede to King Henry's plea. The Catholic church knows of no such thing as divorce so that the divorced parties can marry again. Marriage is indissoluble, except by death,

a little bit of brass about one inch wide and six inches long, with an undecipherable inscription, except that the word "Catharine" may be discerned, is the only monument which marks her grave. It is—or rather was, for when the present restoration of the Cathedral is completed, it may not be so—at the north door of the choir. Everybody entering the choir by that door was obliged to walk on the tomb. Surely the grave of an English Queen, who was also a virtuous and pious lady, whose life might be taken as a model for every English wife and English mother of the present time, deserves a little more respect than it has hitherto received.

"The east side of this county," says Camden, "is adorned with the Castle of Kinnibantum, now Kimbolton, anciently the seat of the Magnavilles, afterwards of the Bohuns and Staffords." Then it came into possession of the Wingfields. Sir Richard Wingfield, K.G., 12th son of Sir John Wingfield, of Letheringham, in Suffolk, Knight and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, married the daughter of Earl Rivers and widow of the Duke of Buckingham, after whose attainder he obtained a grant of Kimbolton Castle, and lordship from Henry VIII., with whom he was highly in favour. He was sent to Spain as an Ambassador for the English Court, and died whilst he was there, being buried at Toledo. His son,

Sir James Wingfield, sold Kimbolton Castle to Sir Henry Montagu, who was afterwards created Earl of Manchester, and his lineal descendant, the present Duke of Manchester, is now the owner. The family of Montagu did not, however, have its origin at that time. It claims descent from the illustrious family of that name who were powerful Barons at the time of the Conquest, and were anciently Earls of Salisbury. The grandfather of Sir Henry Montagu, who purchased Kimbolton Castle, was a descendant of an old Northamptonshire family, being the son of Thomas Montagu, who is buried at Hemington, near Oundle. He was born at Brigstock, and became a famous Lawyer, Judge, and Speaker of the House of Commons. It is related of him that the Commons refused to pass a Bill granting subsidies to Henry VIII. The Monarch sent for Montagu, and when the Speaker appeared and knelt before him, he exclaimed, "Ho, will they not let my Bill pass?" and laying his hand on the head of Montagu he added, "Get my Bill to pass by such a time to-morrow, or else by such a time this head of yours shall be off." Sir Edward, considering the danger in which he stood, worked so assiduously that the Bill was passed. He was Knighted, as also was his son by Queen Elizabeth in 1567. The Sir Henry Montagu who purchased Kimbolton was the son of the last named. He be-

came, like his grandfather, a great lawyer, and in 1620 was created a Baron by the title of Lord Montagu of Kimbolton and Viscount Mandeville, "those titles being chosen by him because he was then in possession of the Castle and Lordship of Kimbolton, which many ages before had belonged to the family of Mandeville." Five years afterwards he was advanced to the dignity of Earl of Manchester. He is represented as being a remarkably vigorous man, so that when nearly 80 years of age he was as active as a young man. His eldest son, Edward, succeeded to the Castle and estates on the death of his father, and he was the celebrated Parliamentary General. In 1641 he was accused at the instigation of the King of having been guilty of high treason, five leading members of the House of Commons being implicated with him. A series of troubles followed, and he took the side of the Parliament, being given the charge of the associated counties of Essex, Hertford, Cambridge, Norfolk, Suffolk, Huntingdon, and Lincoln, and his army, which consisted of 4,000 or 5,000 men, was supported by the estates of the Royalist gentry in those counties which had been seized by the Parliamentarians. He had the command of a regiment in the battle of Edge Hill, and was strong enough to reduce King's Lynn, Horncastle, Lincoln, and other towns which had been holding out

in loyalty to the King. Credit is given to him for having been one of the principal agents in obtaining the victory of Marston Moor. But although he thus fought valiantly, it appears that he was not a man after Cromwell's heart. He was not a canting hypocrite like Cromwell, ready to pillage and murder with the right hand while he held the Bible in his left. We consequently read that although much of the success which had attended the forces of the Parliament soldiery was due to him that "he was removed from all trust." Indeed it is pretty certain that the Earl took no pains to conceal his hatred and detestation of the many wanton cruelties and barbarities perpetrated by Cromwell. He denounced the murder of the King and the brutal manner in which so many excellent men were butchered in cold blood. If he did not openly acknowledge his regret that he had taken any part in the rebellion he went a long way towards it, and he laboured as strenuously for the restoration of the Monarchy as he had at first fought for the Commonwealth. When the restoration was happily effected, the King at once received him into his favour. His grandson was appointed to an office in the Court of King James the II., but resigning his position, he became a supporter of William, Prince of Orange, and secured the generalship of the County of Huntingdon, by raising a body of horse whilst the

Prince was landing. He assisted at the coronation of the Prince, and went to Ireland with him and fought at the battle of the Boyne. He was created Duke of Manchester by George I., and since that time there has been little to disturb the peace of the family.

The origin of the Castle is lost in the vistas of time. It is conjectured that a fort or military station stood on the spot during the Roman occupation of Britain. Leland says of it, "The Castle is double diked, and the building of it metely strong, it longed to the Mandevilles, Erles of Essex. Sir Richard Wingfield built new fair lodgyus and galleries upon the old foundation of the Castle. There is a plotte now elene desolated, not a mile by west from Kimbolton, called Castle Hill, where appear ditches and tokens of old buildings." Brayley says: "Henry first Earl of Manchester expended large sums in making it a comfortable residence, and Robert his grandson the third Earl, made further and very considerable alterations, and many additions." There are tombs of many of the Montagu's in the Church.





## Chapter XXX.

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### SAINTS AND THEIR RELICS.

In the ages of faith, when England was called the *Insula Sanctorum*, the County of Huntingdon contributed several names to the calendar which, although now almost forgotten by people in England, and only remembered in their native County by the places which are still called by their names, as for instance, St. Ives, St. Neots, Bottle Bridge, &c., are however still venerated in all parts of the globe where the Catholic Church is to be found.

#### ST. BOTOLPH.

Bottle Bridge, near Peterborough, was the home of St. Botolph. In the seventh century, there were two English brothers, Botolph and Adulph, who became converts to the Catholic faith, and were received as

inmates of Monasteries in Belgic-Gaul. Adulph became a Bishop, and is at the present day honoured in France as a Saint on the 17th June; St. Botolph, however, had a burning desire to carry to his fellow-countrymen the same advantages which he possessed. He returned to England and begged of King Ethelmund some barren spot of ground on which to found a Monastery. The King gave him the wilderness of Ikanho, now called Bottle Bridge, in Huntingdonshire,\* where he built an Abbey, and where he taught a large number of disciples the Catholic faith and rules of a devout life. The spot where the Abbey stood was afterwards occupied by a parish Church, of which however nothing now remains but the foundations and one solitary gravestone. The late Rector of Overton Longueville (Rev. J. Watson) informed the writer that the stones which constitute the pavement in the south aisle of that Church are the gravestones taken from the old Churchyard of Bottle Bridge, and placed with the inscriptions downwards, and that the whole of the south aisle of the Church was built by materials which were brought from the ruins of Bottle Bridge. St. Botolph died in 655. His Monastery having been destroyed by the Danes, his relics were carried to the

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\*Dr. Hickes is of opinion that St. Botolph lived at Boston, but the weight of evidence and of probability is in favour of Bottle Bridge.

Monastery of Ely, some to Peterborough, and some to Thorney. St. Edward the Confessor afterwards bestowed some portion of them on his own Abbey at Westminster. Few English Saints have been more honoured by our ancestors. Four parishes in London, and innumerable others throughout the country, bear his name. One of the old churches in Huntingdon was also dedicated to his honour. St. Botolph was buried at Thorney, and pilgrimages were made to his Shrine. Some of the relics of the Saint were preserved at Peterborough until the Reformation. Folcard, a Monk of Thorney, wrote a life of St. Botolph, which is still preserved in MSS. in the Cottonian Library.

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FOUNDING OF RAMSEY ABBEY.

One day, in the tenth century, a fisherman, who earned his living by fishing in Ramsey Mere, was unable to catch any fish. He laboured hour after hour, but all in vain; either there were no fish to be caught or the fisherman could not catch them. Wearied out, he lay down in his boat and fell asleep, and he was then visited by a vision of St. Benedict, who told him as soon as dawn should break to spread his nets once more and he would secure an abundant supply of fish. The largest one would be a "Hacaed," which the fisherman was to carry to his master, Ailwin, as a

present from St. Benedict, and to tell him that out of his resources and abundance of goods he was to erect a religious house. The site of the building was to be indicated in the following manner. Ailwin was to closely observe how the animals in the Island laid down when they were weary, and at the spot where a bull should tear up the ground with its foot that was to be the site of the altar of the Church. As a sure indication, Ailwin, who had for many years been distressed with severe chronic gout, should find himself quite well, and, to convince him of the truth of the message, St. Benedict bent the little finger of the fisherman, telling him that Ailwin would be able to straighten it again should he seek for a certain sign. The fisherman, who appears to have had several men on the boat with him, awoke before day break and watched for the dawn of day. As soon as the first streaks of daylight gilded the eastern sky, he commanded the men in the boat to lower the nets, and, as St. Benedict had stated, the net became filled, so that it was with difficulty dragged to land. The largest fish was selected and placed in a box, and the fisherman carried it to Ailwin and told him all that he had heard, and, of course, requested him to straighten his crooked finger to convince him of its truthfulness. Ailwin heard the story with interest, and found that he was able to straighten the little finger. Being

fully convinced that he had received a supernatural commission, he thanked God and St. Benedict for the honour conferred upon him. He immediately ordered his servants to bring him his horse, and rode off to see in what direction his cattle were lying. He took a boat and was rowed to the Island. As he landed on the shore the disease in his feet, with which he had been distressed for so many years, entirely left him, and he saw his cattle all lying down at rest in the form of a cross, and a bull was in the middle. The latter, rising up, struck the ground three hard blows with his hoof. This fulfilment of the fisherman's story fully convinced Ailwin of the truth of the message, and he at once set about to build a Monastery, so that within five years of the event, on Nov. 8th, 974, Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Oswald, Archbishop of York, consecrated the Church and dedicated it to the Mother of God and St. Benedict. From that time until the 16th century the Church was the home of a Benedictine congregation, whose great learning and piety made the Abbey of Ramsey famous throughout the whole country. Several learned writers were nurtured within its walls, and its library, which was scattered and destroyed by those who called themselves Reformers in the 16th century, is said to have been almost unequalled for its many valuable MSS.

“STEALING” THE RELICS OF ST. NEOT.

Mr. Gorham, in his “History of Eynsbury and St. Neots,” gives some details of what he calls “Stealing” the relics of St. Neot out of Cornwall. It is unfortunate for Mr. Gorham’s work, which is in most respects a valuable contribution to the History and Antiquities of the County, that he has allowed religious prejudice to lead him into several palpable absurdities. This story of “Stealing” the relics of the great St. Neot is one of them, and his record carries its own refutation.

To St. Neot is generally ascribed the glorious project of our first and most noble University, in which he was King Alfred’s first adviser. Oxford University was founded by the King at St. Neot’s suggestion. The Saint himself was of noble parentage, and according to many Authors was related to the King. In his youth he took the Monastic habit at Glastonbury, and pursued his studies with great application, until he became one of the greatest scholars of his age, but was yet more admirable for humility, piety, and devotion. He well understood the science which has always characterised the spirit of the Monks, that it is the first duty of a man to save his soul, whether his vocation be the common one of remaining in the world or a call to the monastic state. His vocation was the latter, and he

lead a life of solitude, piety, devotion, and good works in Cornwall. All Monks led laborious lives; in almost all the orders the greater part of the day was spent in manual labour, and St. Neot was no exception to the rule. People travelled great distances to be instructed by him. King Alfred, who himself was all but a Saint, frequently visited him, and by his discourses was inflamed with fresh ardour in the practice of virtue. St. Neot's counsels were also of great use to him in regulating the government of his Kingdom. Then the Christian Church in England was in communion with Catholic Christendom, and recognized the supremacy of the Apostolic See. St. Neot particularly recommended to the King the advancement of useful and sacred studies, and advised him to repair the schools of the English founded at Rome, and to establish others at home. Both which things the King did. Some historians make St Neot to have been the first Professor of Theology at Oxford, but this is doubtful. The Saint died about the year 887 or 888, on the 31st July, on which day his principal festival was kept. Afterwards his festival was observed on October 28th, the day of the translation of his relics from Cornwall into Huntingdonshire, and he is still venerated on that day in the calendar of the Universal Church.

Alban Butler thus briefly records the translation of

the relics: "His body was first buried in his own Church in Cornwall, where certain disciples to whom he had given the Monastic habit had founded a little Monastery. His relics, in the reign of King Edgar, were removed by Count Ethelric and his famous lady Ethelfleda, out of Cornwall into Huntingdonshire, and deposited at Einulfsbury, since called St. Neots or St. Neads, where an Abbey was built by Count Alfric, which bore his name. When Osketil was the ninth Abbot of Croyland, his sister Leviva, to whom the Manor of Einulfsbury belonged, caused these relics to be transferred to Croyland, but they were afterwards brought back to the former Church, which from that time took the name of St. Neots."\*

Mr. Gorham's account is that the body of St. Neot was stolen out of Cornwall and brought into Huntingdonshire. The thieves were a King, a Bishop, an Abbot, and a nobleman. About the year 974, the precise date being uncertain, Earl Alric, a powerful nobleman in Huntingdonshire, and his Countess Ethelfleda, founded and endowed a Priory at Eynesbury, subordinate to the recently established Monastery at Ely. The interest of Brithnod, the first Abbot of Ely, and the influence of Ethelwolde, Bishop of Winchester, having been obtained, the sanction of

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\* Butler's "Lives of the Saints," Vol. x., p. 677.



King Edgar immediately followed. "A patron Saint, however, was wanting," crudely says Mr. Gorham, "for the Monastery, and they therefore decided to steal one," but he does not know why they selected St. Neot. The Saint-stealing combination found no difficulty in receiving from St. Neot-stoke in Cornwall the sacred deposit. The management of the "theft" was committed to the official Warden of the Shrine, who secretly decamped with the treasure of which he had received the trust. He absconded from Neot-stoke on Nov. 30th. The inclemency of the wintry storms, which happened to be very severe, impeded not his journey, and he reached Eynesbury in safety. The body remained for a short time under the roof of the nobleman, the Monastery not having been yet built. In the mean time the inhabitants of Neot-stoke having understood that the Warden was missing, and having suspected the fraud, flocked to the Shrine of the Saint to inspect the sacred chest. On finding that the invaluable treasure was gone, they were filled with self-reproach at their own carelessness, and with indignation at the infidelity of their servant. Having armed themselves with such weapons as they could procure, they sought the fugitive amongst the neighbouring woods, hills, and villages; after much waste of time and fruitless labour, having obtained information respecting the road by which he had fled, a party

of the principal inhabitants traced him to Eynesbury. Restoration of the stolen property having been a vain demand, their rage became excessive. From bribes and threats they were about to proceed to violence, and blood would have been shed had not the Royal authority interposed to quell the disturbance. King Edgar sent an armed force to Eynesbury, with full powers to drive the Cornish men out of the village, and to put them to the sword in case of resistance; so great was the wrath of the Sovereign that he would scarcely give permission for their return without punishment. No sooner were the remains of St. Neot safely deposited at Eynesbury than Earl Alric raised over them a Chapel, and converted the Palace of Earl Elfrid into a Monastery, which was dedicated to the Saint. The site of these religious edifices was on the east bank of the Ouse, on the north side of the present town of St. Neots. In honour of the Saint the name of the place was changed to Neotbury.

This, in effect, is the story as told by Mr. Gorham. His authorities are the "Life of St. Neot," MSS., Bodley; 535, and Thomas, a Monk of Ely. He acknowledges, however, that the latter does not support his case, and with regard to the former he confesses he has had to remove some "varnish" to enable him to arrive at his conclusions. The story, therefore, does not rest on very satisfactory foundations.

But it will not bear criticism. Mr. Gorham starts with the assumption that it was necessary to obtain a body of a Saint from somewhere in order that the dedication of the Monastery might take place. "A patron Saint was wanting," he says, but "by what circumstance the choice was directed to St. Neot it would be fruitless to conjecture." But the Monastery might have been dedicated to St. Neot without fetching his body out of Cornwall. A little reflection might have satisfied Mr. Gorham that all the Churches dedicated to St. Peter did not possess a body of that Saint, or all the Churches dedicated to St. John did not possess his body. It is absurd then to suggest that there was any necessity to get a body of a Saint from somewhere, by hook or by crook, in order that he should become the patron of the new Monastery. There was existing at that time, as there is now, a canon law which regulated Church dedications, and no one will say that that canon law provides that a body of a Saint must be obtained before a dedication can take place.

As to the "theft," Mr. Gorham's own story upsets this. At whose disposal would be the body of St. Neot? Surely the heads of the Church; the Bishops would have absolute control and authority over such a matter. And this is exactly what we find. Ethelwolde, Bishop of Winchester, and Brithnod, Abbot of

Ely, directed the relics to be translated from Cornwall, having obtained the necessary licence of the King to enable the removal to take place on the King's roads. Their object was not, as Mr. Gorham suggest, "because a patron Saint was wanting," but because the new Monastery in Huntingdonshire would be a more suitable resting place for the sacred relics on account of its superior dignity to the obscure Shrine of Neot-stoke, and because the latter was an out-of-the-way place for those who desired to visit the Shrine of the Saint to beseech his prayers and intercessions with God. A translation which had sound reason and common sense on its side, which was carried out in a regular and formal manner, and by the proper and legal authorities cannot be termed a "theft."

No doubt the Cornish men did not like to lose from their midst the relics of their Saint. Mr. Gorham has only a sneer for their veneration, and dubs it "superstition." No doubt the Warden of the Shrine did not publish the instructions he had received to remove the sacred treasure. This, Mr. Gorham considers absconding. And no doubt the Cornish men did their best—short of resorting to violence—to endeavour to regain the wardenship of the body of their native Saint.

A more minute examination of the details of Mr. Gorham's story might reveal further discrepancies

and absurdities, but sufficient has been said to shew that his relation must not be accepted without considerable distrust.

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ST. IVO.

The following is extracted from Alban Butler's Martyrology: "St Ivia, or St. Ivo,\* was a Persian Bishop, who preached the faith in England about the same time with St. Augustine, in the seventh century, and having for some time prepared himself for his last passage by solitude, watching, prayer, and fasting at Slepe, now St. Ives, in Huntingdonshire, he there died and was buried. His body was found by a ploughman, in a pontifical habit, and entire, in 1001, on the 24th of April. By the fame of miracles performed at his relics, many resorted to the place, and a Benedictine Priory was built there, though the Saint's body was soon after translated to the great Abbey of Ramsey. Whitman, the third Abbot at Ramsey, wrote a book of the miracles wrought at his tomb, which was afterwards augmented by Goscelin, a Monk of Canterbury, about the year 1096. Pope Alexander V. granted a licence to build a Church to his honour in Cornwall, where his name was famous, and is given to a parliamentary borough."

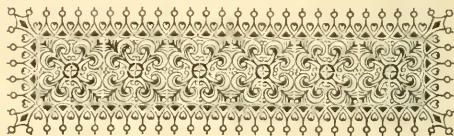
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\* He is called Ivia by Dr. Brown Willis, and in the best manuscript records, but most historians, by giving his name a Latin termination, pronounce it Ivo.

ELFLED.

“Elfled, daughter of Ethelwolde, Earl of East Angles, founder of the Monastery of Ramsey, was preferred Abbess of Ramsey, and confirmed by King Edgar therein. She is reported to have excelled in austerity and holiness of life. When her steward complained to her that she had exhausted her coffers by the profuseness of her charity, she had recourse to prayer, and in answer to her petitions the coffers were recruited to their former fulness. When the taper by which she was reading the lesson in choir one day casually went out, there came such a brightness from her fingers of her right hand that it lighted up the whole Church. She died in the year 992, and was buried in the Lady Church at Ramsey with great veneration.”\*

\* Fuller.



## Chapter XXXIII.

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### THE PRINCE RECTOR OF WOOLLEY.

The pretty village of Woolley, with the tall tapering spire of the church rising from a forest of foliage, has obtained some celebrity from the fact that a Russian Prince held the rectory for nearly 50 years. A Manuscript, containing the following particulars, has been supplied to the author by the Rev. G. Pinder, of Godmanchester :—

“Alphery (Mikipher) born in Russia, and of the Imperial line (Walker’s “Sufferings of the Clergy,” Part ii., p. 183), when the country was torn to pieces by the intestine quarrels in the latter end of the 16th century, and the royal house particularly was so severely persecuted by impostors (“*Introd. à l’Histoire d’Europe par Puffendorf*,” Vol 4, p. 411, edit. 1732),

this gentleman and his two brothers were sent over to England, and recommended to the care of Mr. Joseph Bedell, a Russian merchant. Mr. Bedell, when they were of age fit for the University, sent them all three to Oxford, where, the small pox unhappily prevailing, two of them died of it. We know not whether this surviving brother took any degrees or not, but it is very probable he did since he entered into Holy Orders, and in the year 1618 had the rectory of Woolley in Huntingdonshire, a living of no very considerable value, being rated at under £10 in the King's books ("Liber Valor and Decim, 1728," p. 179). Here he did his duty with great cheerfulness and alacrity, and notwithstanding he was twice invited back to his native country, by some who would have ventured their utmost to have set him on the throne of his ancestors, yet he chose rather to remain with his flock, and to serve God in the humble station of a parish priest. In 1643 he underwent the several trials from the rage of the fanatics, who, not satisfied with depriving him of his living, insulted him in the most barbarous manner. For, having procured a file of musketeers to pull him out of his pulpit as he was preaching on a Sunday, they turned his wife and small children out into the street, into which also they threw his goods. The poor man in this distress raised a tent under some trees in the churchyard over



against his house, where he and his family lived for a week. One day, having gotten a few eggs, he picked up some rotten wood and dry sticks, and with these made a fire in the church porch in order to boil them, but some of his adversaries, to shew how far they could carry their rage against the church, for this poor man was so harmless they could have none against him, came and kicked about his fire, threw down his skillet, and broke his eggs (From a letter written by the Rev. W. Peter Phelps, minister of Woolley, to Wm. Clavel). After this, having still a little money, he made a small purchase in that neighbourhood, built himself a house, and lived there some years. He was encouraged to this by a presbyterian minister who came in his room, who honestly paid him the fifth part of the annual income of the living, which was the allowance made by Parliament to ejected ministers; treated him with great humanity, and did him all the service in his power. It is a great misfortune that this gentleman's name is not preserved; his conduct in this respect being the more laudable because it was not a little singular. Afterwards, probably on the death or removal of this gentleman, Mr. Alphery left Huntingdonshire and came and resided at Hammersmith, till the restoration put him in possession of his living again. He returned on this occasion to Huntingdonshire, where he did

not stay long, for being upwards of 80 years old and withal very infirm, he could not perform the duties of his functions. Having therefore settled a curate, he retired to his eldest son's house at Hammersmith, where shortly after he died, full of years and of honour.

“Mrs. Alphery, the last descendant of the family, married a Mr. Johnson, a cutler, at Huntingdon. She was living in 1764, and had eight children. By her the facts mentioned above were confirmed to Lord Sandwich, and they were likewise known to be true by old people in the neighbourhood. His Lordship informed Dr. Campbell that such was the respect paid this woman on account of her illustrious descent that no person, let their stations be what it would, chose to be seated in her presence if she was standing.”\*

The *Biographia Britannica* (Vol. I. 164) says: “The circumstance of a Russian Prince having been a beneficed clergyman in the English Church is a very extraordinary but well-established fact. The Rev. Nicephorous Alphery, who held the rectory of Woolley, circa 1618, was born in Russia, and of the Imperial line.”

The following is a list of the rectors of Woolley,

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\* From “Mr. Wharton's notes of a conversation which the late Dr. Campbell had with the Earl of Sandwich in 1764.”

supplied by the Rev. George Pinder, the register dating from 1576 :—

- 1618 franciscus Coulthrop.  
1618 Alphery Mikipher, descended from the Imperial line of Russia.  
1643 Great Rebellion, Mikipher Alphery dispossessed. [Mr. B. . . . . the Presbyterian, who paid Alphery his fifths, most probably Edward Beale, whose children's baptisms are recorded.]  
1660 Mikipher Alphery restored.  
1679 Mr. Taylor, Rector, died, and Peter Phelps [Magister Artii e Coll. St. Joan Bapt. Oxon] was presented to y<sup>e</sup> Rectory of Woolley by Edward Bedell, Esq., (after the death of Mr. Taylor), and had institution and induction to it September 23, in the year of our lord 1679.  
1714 Peter Phelps still living ("Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy.")  
1735 Jos. Weedon, Rector, married Martha Rust, widow, of Ramsey, 1739.  
1741 — Herbert Wakeman, curate, 21 years.  
1746 Josh. Weedon died, aged 46.  
1754 Rd. Southgate, a learned Divine and antiquary, Rector.  
1762 Samuel Peacock, Rector.  
1763 — Thos. Wagstaffe, curate.  
1764 — Thos. Harn, curate.  
1788 Wm. Peacock, Rector.

The following register of the baptisms of the children of Mikipher Alphery is taken out of the Register of Woolley :—

Mikipher, son of Mikipher and Joanna,	Baptd. A.D.
his wife     ...     ...     ...	Oct. 7, 1619
Robertus     ...     ...     ...     ...	Dec. 18, 1620

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200 *Legends, etc., of Huntingdonshire.*

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Joāna	...	...	...	...	...	July 21, 1622
Christianus	...	...	...	...	...	March 30, 1624
Maria	...	...	...	..	...	Jan. 6, 1625
Johānes	...	...	...	...	...	Dec. 27, 1628
Jacobus	...	...	...	...	...	18, 1630
Gulielmus	...	...	...	...	...	Sep. 7, 1636

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Marriage of Robertus Alphery and  
 Agnes Poulton, daughter of Thos.  
 Poulton     ...     ...     ...     ...     ...     Feb. 27, 1639

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Robertus, son of Robert Alphery     ...     Aug. 1, 1641  
 Burial of Joāna, daughter of Mikipher  
 and Joāna Alphery     ...     ...     ...     Jan. 23, 1640  
 Joāna, wife of Mikipher Alphery     ...     Jan. 17, 1654



## Chapter XXIV.

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### CURIOUS INCIDENTS.

#### A STRANGE DREAM.

The Earl of Huntingdon, husband of the famous Christian Countess of Huntingdon, had a strange dream. He was a man of singular serenity of mind and of habitual good health, and had rarely dreamed in his life before. He dreamed that he saw a skeleton that appeared at the bed's foot, and, after standing awhile, untucked the bed clothes and crept up under them to the top of the bed, and lay between him and the Countess, who was fast asleep. He awoke, but did not disturb her. In the morning he told her the dream, of which she appeared to make light, but the Earl died in about a fortnight in a fit of apoplexy.

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THE SWEAT OF BLOOD.

Henry, of Huntingdon, says "that while Geoffrey de Mandeville occupied Ramsey Abbey as a castle, having first expelled all the monks, the walls of the church and the cloister adjoining, streamed plenteously with blood, witnessing the Divine indignation, and prognosticating the destruction of the Impious." The historian adds that the marvel was seen by many, and that he himself was a witness of it.

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A CURIOUS JURY LIST IN 1619.

Judge Doddridge, at the Assizes held at Huntingdon, in 1618, censured the Sheriff for impannelling men not sufficiently qualified by rank for serving on the grand jury, and the Sherriff being a humorist, resolved to "fit the Judge with sounds at least." Therefore, at the Assizes in 1619, on calling over the following names and pausing emphatically at the end of the christian instead of the surname, his lordship began to think he had indeed a jury of quality.

Maximilian	King	of Toseland
Henry	Prince	of Godmanchester
George	Duke	of Somersham
William	Marquis	of Stukeley
Edmund	Earl	of Hartford
Richard	Baron	of Bythorn
Stephen	Pope	of Newton

Stephen	Cardinal	of Kimbolton
Humphrey	Bishop	of Buckden
Robert	Lord	of Waresley
Robert	Knight	of Winwick
William	Abbot	of Stukeley
Robert	Baron	of St. Neots
William	Dean	of Old Weston
John	Archdeacon	of Paxton
Peter	Esquire	of Easton
Edward	Fryer	of Ellington
Henry	Monk	of Stukeley
George	Gentleman	of Spaldwick
George	Priest	of Graffham
Richard	Deacon	of Catworth

The Judge, it is said, was highly pleased with the practical joke, and complimented the Sheriff on his ingenuity.

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#### HUNTINGDON STURGEONS AND GODMANCHESTER

##### BLACK HOGS.

In the History of Huntingdon by "R.C.," the following anecdote is related: "In 1624, according to *Rider's British Merlin*, 'the bailiffes and York, the constable of Huntingdon, seized Sir Robert Osborne's nagged colt for a sturgeon.' This singular notification is not a little puzzling, and would seem to point out the origin of the vulgar, contemptuous appellation,

‘Huntingdonshire Sturgeons.’ The tradition, however, is, that after a heavy inundation of the Ouse, several of the inhabitants of Huntingdon, Godmanchester, and Brampton, were standing together watching the subsiding of the waters, when they observed a dark heavy substance come floating towards them, but at a great distance down the river. Instantly every mind was set to work to conjecture what this might be. Imagination invested it with a thousand different forms, till at last it was settled by the Huntingdonians to be a sturgeon—by the men of Godmanchester to be a black hog—and by those of Brampton to be a donkey. By this time the object of their wonder had reached the beach, and on dragging it ashore, behold to prove the sagacity of the heroes of Brampton, a drowned donkey was revealed! In derision, the terms ‘Huntingdon sturgeons’ and ‘Godmanchester black hogs’ were applied to the others, and in time became indiscriminately used towards the inhabitants of the respective places.”

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THE PLAGUE.

In 1655 the plague visited Ramsey, and, as appears by the Register, destroyed 400 of the inhabitants. It was brought to the town by Major Wm. Cromwell, who caught the infection by wearing a coat, the cloth



of which came from London ; the tailor who made the coat and all his family also perished.

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THE BEGGAR'S BUSH AT GODMANCHESTER.

The following legend is taken from "The complete English Traveller, 1770." After a sketch of the local history of Godmanchester, the writer says :—"There is a tree near this town called the Beggar's Bush, but on what account it first obtained that name is not certainly known ; only we are told by Doctor Fuller that King James I. and the great Chancellor Bacon, being on a progress through Huntingdonshire, as they passed by Godmanchester his Majesty took an opportunity of reproving the Chancellor for his extravagance, and told him if he went on at that rate he would soon come to the Beggar's Bush. Whatever truth may be in that story, this is certain, that when people see a man wasting his substance in prodigality and debauchery they say, 'he will come to the Beggar's Bush.'"

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ZEAL FOR GLORY.

During the time when soldiers were being raised all over the country to oppose the Pretender and his forces, in 1745—6, Huntingdon and St. Ives both contributed a detachment. The St. Ives men proceeded to Huntingdon, and the two bodies commenced

the march northwards. The Huntingdon men took the lead, but the St. Ives detachment being the most numerous, considerable dissatisfaction was felt by the latter that they were not allowed to occupy the foremost place. They urged that their detachment was the most important, and that the town they represented was a more populous and more important place than that of Huntingdon. On the other hand, the men of Huntingdon alleged that though their detachment was not so large still they represented the county town and the only borough in the county, and they were therefore entitled to priority. They had got no further than Alconbury when it appeared that there was no possibility of settling the dispute. The commander of the St. Ives detachment therefore made a stand opposite the Wheat Sheaf Inn at Alconbury, and refused to advance forward unless the first place was given them. This the Huntingdon men firmly refused to accede, consequently the St. Ives men turned back and marched homewards by way of Wood Walton. The retreat of the rebels shortly afterwards made it unnecessary for either the Huntingdon or the St. Ives men to re-offer their services to their country. The county subscribed on this occasion a sum of £2,059 13s. 10d.

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EXTRAORDINARY INCIDENT.

An extraordinary incident occurred at St. Ives on Jan. 5th, 1801. A bullock walked into a passage of the Royal Oak public house in that town, and the staircase door being open, it went upstairs into the dining room, and ran with such violence against the front window (which was a sash) as to drive the whole of the window frame into the street, where the animal fell also, a distance of more than 20 feet. It received no material injury, but was so much terrified that it ran with great precipitancy down to the bridge, and being stopped there, it leaped over the side into the river, where it was carried down the current so rapidly that it was never afterwards heard of.

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CURIOUS FATALITIES AT SAWTRY.

In 1810 a man named Seaton went to a pond at Sawtry to fetch water, when he fell in and was drowned. Eleven years later, in 1821, his brother also fell into the same water and was drowned; and four years later, in March, 1825, another brother, Samuel Seaton, fell into the same pond and was drowned.

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A SAD INCIDENT.

A fine little girl, ten years of age, the adopted daughter of Mrs. Barnes, of St. Ives, met a strange

death on January 20th, 1816. While walking with some of her companions she dirtied her shoes, and she said she would go and wash them. While so employed, she told the others who had approached the river with her, hand in hand, that she felt the ground giving way under her feet, and desired them to let go their hold, or she must drag them all into the water. This they had no sooner done than the bank caved in with her, and the unfortunate girl was drowned.

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PURITY REWARDED.

An extraordinary discovery was made at Godmanchester by a traveller on Feb. 16th, 1816. His resources being at a low ebb, he had been indulged with a lift in the "pass-cart," and went to the vagrants' lodging-house to pass the night. In course of the evening, observing some writing of an objectionable character on the front of the chimney, he took his hat and while flapping the brim in order to erase the offensive words, a paper was observed to drop from it, which on examination proved to be a hundred pound note of the Bank of England. The discovery naturally excited some comment, and the explanation the man gave of his coming into possession of the hat was, that being extremely destitute he begged it from a brother soldier in the Guards, who told him he had picked it up on the field of Waterloo. The

note was forwarded to London, and afterwards returned to the poor man with the gratifying intelligence that it was a genuine one. The story, which is an absolute fact, has been taken to illustrate a temporal reward for virtue, for had it not have been for the poor man's observance of the great law of purity, he would probably never have obtained the money.

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A HOPE FULFILLED.

On the 17th Nov., 1834, Mr. Mite of Godmanchester, died, at the age of 90. He is said to have always expressed a hope that he should not be a day ill before his death, and this desire was singularly fulfilled, for he died after a few hours confinement to his bed. He is said to have possessed a very remarkable memory.

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A TRANCE.

A Cambridge paper of January, 1838, contains the following: "There is at this time a young woman, aged 18, residing at Needingworth, near St. Ives, Hunts., who has been in a trance asleep for 12 days. She keeps quite warm, except her feet, and they are cold and stiff. Last week her father brought her downstairs into a warmer room, thinking it might be the means of rousing her, but it had not the desired effect. On Monday she opened her eyes and made a

motion with her hand for something to drink, which being given her, she became convulsed for a time, and then sank into her former state of torpor, in which she has continued ever since."

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A NIGHT ADVENTURE.

On the 22nd September, 1840, a vendor of toys, a stranger to the district, visited St. Ives, for the purpose of selling his goods, and in the evening set out for Fenstanton. The night was very dark and stormy, and not knowing the place, he accidentally fell into the stanch pit. He sank twice and then seized the iron-work with his hand, by which means he suspended himself until three o'clock the next morning. When the stanch keeper came to wind up the locks, he discovered the unfortunate man in a state of great exhaustion, still clinging to the iron-work frame, with the water almost up to his chin.

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A CHEAP HOUSE.

In January, 1845, a dwelling house at Little Bedford, Hunts., was sold for eleven shillings.

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CURIOUS RECOVERY OF SIGHT.

In April, 1853, a married woman named Wilkinson, living at Eynesbury, and who had been totally blind for 20 years, fell down stairs. The shock caused to

the system by this fall resulted in the complete recovery of the woman's sight.

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A NOVEL MODE OF EJECTMENT.

In October, 1863, a novel mode of ejectment was resorted to by the Trustees of the Charities in Ramsey, a thatcher was ordered to remove the thatch from two cottages occupied by three aged widows, who were consequently compelled to seek shelter elsewhere.



## Chapter XXV.

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### PENANCES AND DISPENSATIONS.

In Strype's Memorials, Vol. III., there is "An account of Cardinal Poles' Visitation of the Diocese of Lincoln, in 1556, to enquire whether Catholic doctrine and ritual were duly observed in every Church." The account contains several presentments referring to the County of Huntingdon.

"One Hullock, curate of All Saints', in Huntingdon, administered the sacrament to several persons without auricular confession, using only a general confession in the English tongue, such as was accustomed in the time of the schism. He was cast into gaol, then enjoined public penance; and that being performed, he was discharged from ministering any more in the Diocese of Lincoln, and so he departed."



The people of Huntingdon, under the persecutions to which those who held to the old faith had been subjected, had grown lax in the observance of the fasts, for the account says :—"Several in Huntingdon for eating flesh in lent, *without a dispensation*, were cast into prison, and enjoined to carry faggots two several days." It is noticeable that they were not condemned for eating flesh, but for doing so "without a dispensation."

"The Vicar of Spaldwick, was presented for carrying in his arms his child, which he had in wedlock in the time of the schism, to the scandal of others. He was enjoined to carry it no more, and he made a recantation in the church."

"One Burneby, of Brampton, when vicar of the church, on Palm Sunday, opened the doors of the church with the staff of the cross, and said in sport 'what a sport have we towards? Will our vicar run at quintine with God Almighty'? He submitted himself and was enjoined public penance."

"Three of St. Ives, who had fled because of religion, now appearing, submitted themselves, and recanting the heresies which they held, and being absolved from their excommunication, were put into prison and afterwards carried faggots."

"The Vicar of Steukly gave the sacrament to some not confessed, and to some that desired auricular con-

fession be denied it. He was cast into prison, and made a recantation before his parishioners."

In the year 1562, representations were made to Parliament on behalf of those engaged in the fishing trade to the effect that since the change in religion, fasting and abstinence days had been unobserved and consequently that there had been a great decrease in the sale of fish, and those engaged in that industry had seriously suffered in consequence. With a view to remedying this an Act of Parliament was passed converting Wednesday into what had previously been called an abstinence day. On fast days only one meal in the day was allowed, that not before noon, and no meat to be eaten. Abstinence did not limit the quantity, but the quality, it imposed fish diet instead of meat. By the Act 5 Elzth. Cap. 5, Wednesday was made an abstinence day, and it was to be so observed on pain of fine.

In the Parish Register of Eynesbury, the following license is registered in 1568 :—"Whereas by a statute made in the 5<sup>th</sup> yeare of the Queene's Maiestyes Raygne, that now is called the Statute of Navygacion, yt is graunted that Persons not notoryously sycke maye be lycensed by the Parson of the Paryshe where the partyes dwell, to enjoy the benefyt of eatynge of Fleshe on the Daies prohybted by the saide Statute, for the recoverynge of theyre Healthe: (yf yt

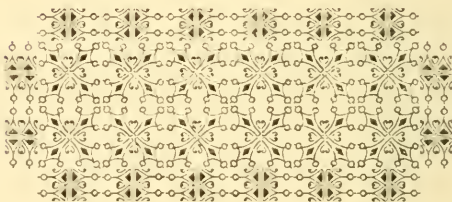
pleasithe God :) Let yt be knowne to the seere hereof that Iohn Burton, of the Paryshe of Eynesbury in the Countye of Huntingdon, being verye sycke, ys lycensyd to eate Fleshe for the Tyme of his sycknes, soo that he enioyeinge the benefytt of the Lycense his syckness contynewinge viii dayes do cause the same to be regestered into the Regester Booke in the same Paryshe, accordynge to the tenor of the Statute in that behalfe : and this Lycense no longer to endure than his sycknes doth laste: by me Wyllyam Samuell, Parson of Eynesburye.”

A few extracts from the Act referred to may be read with interest :—After enacting that on “every Wednesday in every weck throughout the whole yeare . . . no manner of person shall eat any flesh on that day,” and that offending against this, a penalty will be incurred of Three Pounds for every time or else three months close imprisonment without bail or main-price,” the Act goes on to say : “XVI. and every person or persons within whose house any such offence shall be done, and being privy or knowing thereof, and not effectually punishing, or disclosing the same to some public officer having the authority to punish the same, for every such offence to forfeit 40/-.” With regard to the licenses, which had previously been granted of the Parish Parson when there was sufficient need, and for which no money was al-

lowed to be taken by the priest, he was unable to grant such dispensation for insufficient reason without being subject to the control of his ecclesiastical superiors. But now Parliament had taken the matter in hand and had ruled that no one need fast who had the money to purchase a license, for the eighteenth section provided thus : "Every license made to any person or persons being of the degree of a Lord of Parliament, or of their wives, shall be upon condition that every such person, so to be licensed shall pay to the poor men's box within the parish where they shall dwell, or remain, six and twenty shillings and eight pence, the same to be paid within one month on pain of forfeiture of every such license ; and every license to any person of the degree of a Knight or Knight's wife shall be upon condition, and every such person shall so licensed shall pay yearly thirteen shillings and fourpence, to the use aforesaid, and in form aforementioned ; and every license to any person or persons being under the degrees abovesaid shall be upon condition, that every such person so licensed shall pay yearly six shillings and eightpence to the said use and in form aforementioned." The section, however, which refers to the Alconbury license is as follows:—"That all persons which by reason of notorious sickness shall be enforced for recovery of health to eat flesh for the

time of their sickness shall be sufficiently licensed by the Bishop of the Diocese, or by the parson, vicar, or curate of the parish where such person shall be sick, or of one of the next parish adjoining, if the said parson, vicar, or curate of his or their own parish shall be wilful, or if there be no curate within the same parish; which license shall be made in writing signed with the hand of the Bishop of the Diocese, or of the parson, vicar, or curate, and not to endure longer than the time of the sickness: and that if the sickness shall continue above the space of eight days after such license granted, then the license shall be registered in the Church Book, with the knowledge of one of the church wardens, and the party licensed shall give to the curate fourpence for the entry thereof." The Act further regulates how many dishes or kinds of fish are to be put on the table at a meal, and what kinds of flesh those who are licensed may eat, and then comes the following explanation: "XXXIX. And because no person shall misjudge of the intent of this Estatute, limiting orders to eat fish, and to forbear eating of flesh, but that the same is purposely intended and meant politickly for the increase of Fishermen and Mariners, and repairing of Port towns and Navigation, and not for any superstition to be maintained in the choice of meats. XL. Be it enacted that whosoever shall by preaching,

teaching, writing, or open speech notify that any eating of fish or forbearing of flesh mentioned in this Statute, is of any necessity for the saving of the soul of Man, or that it is the service of God, otherwise than as other Politick laws are and be; that then such persons shall be punished as Spreaders of false news are and ought to be.”



## Chapter XXVII.

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### CELEBRITIES.

Francis White, born at St. Neots. His father, who was a minister, had five sons, all of whom became clergymen, and two of them eminent. Francis was educated at Caius College, and afterwards appointed first Dean, then Bishop of Carlisle, Bishop of Norwich, and finally Bishop of Ely. He died between 1630 and 1640. He was the author of several works.

Henry Saltry, was born in the county, and became a Cistercian Monk in the Abbey of Sawtry. He wrote a very learned work on the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. He died in 1140.

Gregory of Huntingdon, so called from the place of his nativity, became a Benedictine Monk at Ramsey, and is said by Fuller to have been appointed prior or

vice abbot, "a place which he deserved, being one of the most learned men of that age for his great skill in languages." He died about 1280. He is said to have enriched the Abbey library with a large number of Hebrew works.

Hugh, of St. Neots, was born in the town of that name. He wrote many Works and Commentaries, and died in 1340.

William Ramsey, born in Huntingdonshire, became Abbot of Crowland. He wrote in Poetry the lives of St. Guthlac, St. Neot, and St. Edmund. He died 1180.

Henry, of Huntingdon, conferred a lasting honour on the town and county by his great work of the History of the Saxon Kings. He was a secular priest; *i.e.*, not attached to a monastery. He died about 1260.

Roger, of St. Ives, was very active in preaching and writing against the Lollard heresy, and wrote a work in refutation of Sir John Oldcastle's opinions. He flourished in 1420.

John Young, a monk of Ramsey at the time of the dissolution, is known chiefly for the efforts he made to save a portion of the magnificent library from destruction.

John White, brother to the Bishop of Ely, was born at St. Neots, and became chaplain to King James. He died in 1615. He was the author of several Works.



Sir Robert Cotton, Knight and Bart., son of John Cotton, Esquire, was born at Connington, and became one of the most famous antiquarians in the kingdom. The Catholic Church, which has always been the nursery of learning, endeavoured to secure at his death his valuable archæological library, to be added to the immense library at the Vatican, but the overtures were never completed. He died in 1631, in the 61st year of his age.

Stephen Marshall, was born at Godmanchester, and was famous for nothing but a frequent desertion of principle. Fuller says of him : “ he was so supple a soul that he brake not a joynt, yea sprain not a sinew, in all the alteration of times.” He died in 1665.

Richard Broughton, was born at Great Stukeley, at the time when the penal laws were in operation against the Catholic Church, and was compelled to fly from his native country. He was ordained priest at Rheims. He wrote a book on English Ecclesiastical History, which is a valuable and learned work.

Ambrose, son of John Nicholas, was born at Needingworth, and was apprenticed to a salter. He became Lord Mayor of London in 1576, and founded twelve almshouses in London.

Sir Wolstan, son of Thomas Dixie, was born at Catworth, and was apprenticed to a skinner. He

became Lord Mayor of London in 1585. He gave large sums in charity.

Richard Fishborn, was born at Huntingdon, and gave away in charity £10,700. He died 1625.

Sir Oliver Cromwell, born at Hinchingbroke, died 1654.

Robert Fox, F.S.A., the historian, of Godmanchester, was born at Huntingdon in 1798. He was a surgeon at Godmanchester, and several times filled the office of bailiff to the Corporation.

Sir John Gedney, son of Mr. William Gedney, was born at St. Neots, and became Lord Mayor of London in 1427 and again in 1447.

Sir Robert Drope, born at St. Neots, was Lord Mayor of London in 1474.

Rev. B. Hutchinson, F.R.S., of St. Ives, published "Proposals for a History of Huntingdonshire."

Mr. Pratt, of St. Ives, was the author of "Gleanings in England."

Nayborn, who was punished for blasphemy in 1656, pilloried, burnt through the tongue and branded with a B, died at Holme in 1660.

Wm. Johnson, D.D., Rector of Warboys, was the author of a book, entitled "Deus Nobiscum, or a sermon preached upon a great deliverance at sea, 1648, with a narative annexed," in which it is said that he was "twice shipwrackt, and that he lived four

days without any sustenance, and lay two nights and two days upon a rock in the deep, several times all hope of life being taken away." He had been chaplain and sub-almoner to Charles II., and when he died in 1666, he was Archdeacon of Huntingdon.

Samuel Pepys, Secretary to the Admiralty in the reigns of Charles II. and James II., was born at Brampton. He collected a large number of valuable manuscripts, and left a diary, which has shed a brilliant light upon the manners and customs of society in that time. He died in 1703.

John Dryden, a relative of the poet, bequeathed large sums of money in charity to various places in the county.

Rev. Fr. Faber, who was one of the originators of the Tractarian Movement, held for some time the rectory of Elton, which he resigned to enter the Catholic Church. He afterwards published a number of Theological Works, which have been extensively translated and circulated in almost every country in Europe.

Beaumont, Bishop of London in the time of Henry I., is believed to have been born at Sawtry. He held the offices of warden of the Marches of Wales and governor of Salop. He died in 1127.

Dr. Olinthus Gregory, LL.D., F.R.S., the famous mathematician, was born at Yaxley, in 1774. He

started in London as a bookseller, and at the same time gave lessons in mathematics. Finding the latter the more remunerative of the two, he gave up the business and applied himself wholly to mathematics. He became professor at the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, and was editor of "Pantalogia," &c. He died on February 2nd, 1841.

The Rev. G. C. Gorham, of St. Neots, wrote a very learned Work on the History of that town. The volume is now very scarce. A copy was recently sold by auction at St. Neots for £20.

Richard Southgate, the learned antiquarian, was appointed rector of Woolley in 1754, the living then being worth about £120 per annum. The circumstances attending this preferment are too honourable to Mr. Southgate to be omitted. The living had become vacant during the ministry of Mr. Peacocke, who was the patron, and was himself intended for the Church. His guardians, not being able to agree as to the person they should present, suffered it to lapse to the Bishop. The Bishop mentioned these circumstances to Mr. Southgate when he presented him to the living, and although the Bishop left him entirely clear of any promise or restraint respecting it, as soon as Mr. Peacocke had taken orders, Mr. Southgate went to the Bishop and resigned the living, 1761 or 1762. The Bishop said "you have done Richard what I knew

you would do, you have behaved like a christian and a good man, and I have this additional motive for thinking myself bound to provide for you." This obligation, however, appears to have been forgotten, for although the Bishop lived until 1766, and had many opportunities of fulfilling his promise, Mr. Southgate received no other promotion from him. Mr. Southgate was curate in several parishes in the county, and finally was appointed to the valuable living of Warsop, in Nottinghamshire.



## Chapter XXVIII.

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### ODDITIES.

#### A SPORTING ODDITY.

John Kilbrow, a person well known to many gentlemen of the turf as a bit seller and an attendant at most of the races in the kingdom, died in 1797, in very reduced circumstances at Waternewton. A contemporary notice of him says: "He had undergone vicissitudes in life; had been a horse dealer of some eminence, and in that line had travelled in France and other foreign parts; returning to England poor, he entered into several militias, and was at one time a sergeant in the Huntingdonshire regiment, but his predilection for horses and the turf occasioned his getting rid of that situation." At a town in Bedfordshire, some years ago, he was, according to a turf phrase, "quite broken down." It was in harvest

time, the week before Richmond races, near which place he was born, and to reach there in time for the races he hit upon the following expedient. He applied to a blacksmith of his acquaintance to stamp on a padlock the words "Richmond Gaol," which with a chain was fixed to one of his legs, and he composedly went into a corn field to sleep. As he expected, he was soon apprehended, taken before a Magistrate, who after some deliberation, ordered two constables to guard him in a carriage to Richmond. No time was to be lost as Kilbrow said he had not been tried, and hoped they would not let him lay while another assize. The constables on their arrival at the gaol said to the keeper: "Sir, do you know this man?" "Yes, very well," replied the keeper; "Its Kilbrow, I have known him many years." "We suppose," said the constables, "he has broken out of your gaol, as he has a chain and padlock on his leg with your mark; is not he a prisoner?" "A prisoner!" exclaimed the keeper, "I never heard any harm of him in my life." "Nor," said Kilbrow, "have those gentlemen either; they have been so good as to bring me home out of Bedfordshire, and now I will not give them any further trouble; I've got the key of the padlock, and I'll not trouble them to unlock it. I thank them for their good usage." The distance he thus travelled was about 170 miles.

A NONOGENARIAN.

Thomas Beckett, died at Woodstone, in October, 1800, at the age of 93. In his will he bequeathed a cottage to his grandmother during her life. He occupied a farm, the rental of which was £10 per annum, but by industry and perseverance he was able to amass a fortune of £6,000.

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AN ECCENTRIC SHOEMAKER.

Charley Strickson was a Stanground oddity. He is described as being a remarkably lean man, with a hungry look. To be stout, corpulent, rotund, heavy weighted, or anything else in that direction was his last wish, and about the last thing he could realise even if he had wished it. Although a shoemaker by trade he came of noble stock—at least so he boasted. His chief peculiarity was an abhorrence of all that tended to embonpoint that it is said he would seek to pass by on the other side any portly resident, whilst he was never to be seen on the Long Causeway at Peterborough when the fat stock fair was being held there. It may thus be imagined he was thin, so thin indeed that his tailor made special bargains with him, the boys of the place made fun at him, and the ordinary passer-by turned his head to take a second glance. Amongst his eccentricities especially to be noticed was a peculiarity in his dress.



No ordinary attire would do, and he would consequently be seen dressed in a cutaway coat, and a pair of black trowsers which had shrunk up to within a few inches of his knees, leaving his spindle legs poking through and terminating in a pair of low shoes and buckles. On his head was a beaver top hat—he would wear no other—and he stood five feet eight inches in his boots. These exterior qualifications, together with his abnormally slender proportions, even had they been unaccompanied, would have entitled him to a place in the gallery of oddities. No one particularly knew his antecedents, had not his earnest asseverations as to a high born genealogy been to the contrary. It mattered little to his patrons; he was a good cobbler, and was a first-class shoemaker; his charges were reasonable, and that for ordinary purposes was sufficient, especially as he had been the family workman, possibly, for years. Although in his rounds he wore his cutaway coat, his beaver hat, and his black trowsers, and had high notions of his antecedents, yet he was never above his trade, and his shoemaking apron always hid his waistcoat. A great peculiarity in it was a hole at the breast, which, however often it was replenished with a new one, would assuredly make its appearance. This, it subsequently transpired, was not by accident but was purposely cut

by our hero himself, and was regarded by Charley with a superstitious reverence. Though noticed by all, for years the why and wherefore remained a profound secret. It was rumoured that it was to perpetuate the assassination of an ancestor of some two or three generations back! Winter or summer the eccentric shoemaker would be found with a flower in his button hole, and more frequently than not in summer it would be a common nettle, which he would carefully explain, "Stroke it the right way, sir, and it won't sting, neither will a Strickson." For many years he followed an old custom of retailing frumenty (or firmity) on Good Friday mornings. The receipt for this ancient "mess of pottage" he always declared had descended through his family for generations, which he alone considered indisputable testimony of its quality. About the year 1848 Strickson's wife was found drowned in a drain at Newark, into which she had accidentally fallen, before it was railed off as at the present day. The oddity, however, never married again, and died some nine years after, and was buried in Stanground Churchyard, aged 70.

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RAVELEY JACK.

A Huntingdonshire oddity has given his name to a part of the river Nene. A gravelly shallow, near Overton Longueville, which deepens into a hole is

known as "Raveley's Hole," and is familiar to anglers and bathers. Somewhere between the decade of 1840 and 1850 there went to Peterborough a tall, thin, lanky, half-silly youth, about the age of 16. He had no occupation, and no means of subsistence. He could give no account of himself, not even of his name. If he had any parents—and it is not to be supposed that like Topsy he "grewed"—he did not know them, and they were ignorant of him. In place of a better, the public of Peterborough awarded him the name of "Jack" for a christian name, and as he was supposed to have come from the village of Raveley he had that added for a surname. Whatever objections there may be to this manner of fixing names it has at least some show of reason, and was not by any means so arbitrary as the rule adopted by Mr. Bumble. The absence of an hereditary name, however, never seemed to weigh heavily on the mind of Raveley. He settled down very comfortably under the name chosen for him by the popular voice of Peterborough, and he answered to it readily. His oddities and eccentricities made him familiar in the town and a butt for the wit and humour of the young men. He was accustomed to account for any imperfections in the upper story by declaring that going one day a little too near the Town Mill, which at that time stood upon the Thorpe-road, nearly opposite the present

Gaol, one of the sails struck him on the head, and ever afterwards his understanding became cloudy. It is probable, however, that his intelligence was not of the brightest previous to that time, or he would have kept further away from the mill sail. Amongst his many peculiarities he is said to have been an exceedingly swift runner, and was a constant competitor in foot races. The following incident, which illustrates his powers in this respect is related :—

“In those days hares would frequently make their way from the fields to feed on the rich pasturage in the Minster Close. Experience has shown that in spite of the vast increase of population hares are still found foolish enough to run the same risk. It is probable, however, that these visitants from the local game preserves in the neighbourhood were not frequent, for a local adage said that

If in the Minster Close a hare  
Should for itself have made a lair,  
Be sure before the week is down  
A fire will rage within the town.\*

But one day it was reported that a hare was in the Minster Close. Before the local sportsmen had time to turn out with their guns, Raveley had heard the news, and had conceived the idea of enjoying a coursing match to himself. Accordingly he repaired to the Minster Yard, and presently the hare made its appear-

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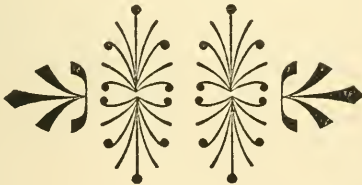
\*A similar piece of folk lore still survives at Ramsey.

ance. Raveley was quickly in pursuit. Away went the hare, over the tombstones and through the bushes, first into one corner and then into another. Raveley was after it, keeping close up to it; no greyhound could have followed better. Hour after hour went by, but still the chase continued; the hare was evidently getting puffed, but Raveley was fresh and still eager in the chase. The result was that after several hours coursing the hare had to succumb; Raveley pounced upon it and seized his prize in triumph, and received the applause of numbers of people who had witnessed this strange coursing match." Unlike many of the class of oddities, Raveley had a *penchant* for cleanliness, and during the summer he was accustomed to resort to the Nene for a bathe. One day he entered the river at the gravelly shallow, and although unable to swim, he waded across to the opposite meadow, and, after disporting himself for a time, proceeded to recross the stream. But he failed to recognise the exact spot, and instead of keeping to the shallow water he was soon plunging in the deep hole close by. Assistance not being at hand he was drowned. The body was drawn out on the Huntingdonshire side of the river, and he was buried in Woodstone Church-yard at the expense of the parish, and entered in the register by the name accorded to him by the popular voice of the residents of the city.

COOPER THORNHILL.

Cooper Thornhill, who kept the Bell Inn, at Stilton, in the first half of the last century, was a well-known oddity, being chiefly famous from the fact that Stilton cheese was first made for the travellers stopping at his hostelry. But he was a famous rider. One day he casually rode on to the racecourse at Kimbolton with a mare he had ridden from Stilton, when seeing that the horses entered for the race for the cup were not superior to the one he rode he entered the lists, and to the surprise of everybody he carried off the prize. Very curious stories were current concerning his feats of horsemanship, and he was very much addicted to the habit which prevailed amongst all classes at that time, of entering into competitions for wagers. In another part of this volume (see Chapter on "Feats and Wagers") a collection of some of these competitions will be found. The North Road, by the side of which Cooper Thornhill lived, was frequently the scene of such trials of skill and equine endurance, which were witnessed by large numbers. On Oct. 29th, 1745, Mr. Thornhill accepted a wager undertaking to ride a distance of 213 miles in 15 hours. He left Stilton at four o'clock in the morning, and rode to the King's Arms, Shoreditch, London, which he reached at 7.50, he immediately returned to Stilton, and then again set out for London, reaching Shoreditch at 4.15 in the afternoon. He had

thus travelled 213 miles in 12 hours and 15 minutes, and consequently won his wager with two or three hours to spare. An old chronicler, who mentions these facts in a private diary, adds, "Many horses engaged." Shortly after this exploit, he engaged, for another wager, to ride from Shoreditch to Stilton in 4 hours and 30 minutes, and he again won the wager by completing the task in 3 hours and 56 minutes. These competitions were witnessed by many of the principal residents in the county. Not only was Mr. Thornhill himself an oddity, but the wildest stories concerning everything about him were freely circulated. It was reported that he once had a corn rick on his premises which was valued at £800, but when it came to be thrashed it was found to be merely a shell, for the whole of the inside had been consumed by rats!



## Chapter XXVIII.

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### OLIVER CROMWELL & HINCHINGBROOKE.

Oliver Cromwell was born at Huntingdon on the 25th of April, 1599, and his family was (says the Book of Days) of good account. His uncle and godfather, Sir Oliver Cromwell, possessed estates in Huntingdonshire which were afterwards worth £30,000 a year. For services rendered to King Henry VIII., especially in the matter of the visitation of religious houses his ancestors received grants of the nunnery at Hinchingbrooke, Sawtry abbey, lands at Eynesbury, Eaton, and Little Paxton, Ramsey abbey and all its Huntingdonshire possessions, St. Mary's priory at Huntingdon, and of the monastery of St. Neots. Other property taken by King Henry VIII. from Ecclesiastical bodies on the pretence of purifying





HINCHINBROOKE HOUSE.



religion were also awarded to the Cromwell family. In 1546 Henry William Cromwell, who was Knighted by Queen Elizabeth, represented Huntingdonshire in Parliament, was several times Sheriff, and was also a Commissioner of the Peace. He had the reputation of being extremely liberal, and would cast money to the poor of Ramsey to be scrambled for when he visited that town. This liberality obtained for him the title of the "Golden Knight." He frequently resided at Hinchingbrooke, and in 1564 entertained Queen Elizabeth there. The father of the Protector, who married the daughter of Sir Robert Stuart, of Ely, represented Huntingdon in Parliament, was a Justice of the Peace, a Fen Drainage Commissioner, and held other public offices. Oliver was the eldest of ten, and the family exchequer having become somewhat reduced, he conducted a brewing business at Huntingdon. This gave rise to the following verses, which give an epitome of the Protector's life :

"A brewer may be a Burgess grave,  
And carry the matter so pure and so brave,  
That he the better might play the knave.

A brewer may be a Parliament man,  
For there the knavery first began,  
And brew most cunning plots he can.

A brewer may put on a Nabal face  
And march to the wars with such a grace  
That he may get a Captain's place.

A brewer may speak so wondrous well  
That he may rise (strange things to tell)  
And so be made a Colonel.

A brewer may make his foes to flee  
And raise his fortunes so that he  
Lieutenant General may be.

A brewer may be all in all  
And raise his powers, both great and small,  
That he may be a Lord General.

A brewer may be like a fox with a cub,  
And teach a lecture out of a tub,  
And give the wicked world a rub.

A brewer by 's excess and rate  
Will promise his army he knows what,  
And sit upon the college gate.

Methinks I hear one say to me,  
Pray why may not a brewer be  
Lord Chancellor o' th' University?

A brewer may be as bold as Hector,  
When as he drank his cup of nectar,  
And a brewer may be a Lord Protector.

And here remains the strangest thing,  
How this brewer about his liquor did bring  
To be a Conqueror or a King.

A brewer may do what he will,  
And rob the Church and State, to sell  
His soul unto the Devil in Hell."

Oliver was named after his uncle and god-father, Sir Oliver of Hinchingbrooke, and it is related that while an infant a monkey took him out of his cradle and ran with him upon the roof of Hinchingbrooke

House, and the family alarmed for his safety brought beds to catch him upon. A few years later, Oliver and the future King Charles had a boy's fight at Hinchingbrooke, when it is related that Charles came off the worst, but Oliver had the advantage of being older, taller, and stouter.

One day, while Oliver Cromwell was bathing in the Ouse, he was in danger of drowning, when the Rev. Mr. Johnson, curate of Connington, seeing his danger, plunged into the water and rescued him. Some years after Oliver was marching with his soldiers through the county, when he saw Mr. Johnson, and asked him if he remembered the incident? "Yes," said the curate, a staunch loyalist, "but I wish I had left you in rather than see you in arms against the King."

Oliver was educated at the Grammar School, Huntingdon, and several stories are related of him while there, in one of which it is alleged that there were future indications of his after life. He afterwards went to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and there and throughout the earlier years of his manhood he led a depraved, dissolute, immoral life. His subsequent history is a matter of general knowledge.

Hinchingbrooke house is a charming spot, all the surroundings being extremely pretty. It stands on elevated ground, and commands some beautiful views extending over a large expanse of the county, watered

by the Ouse. A convent of Benedictine nuns formerly stood on the site, but it was suppressed at the Reformation, and the revenues were given by King Henry VIII. to Richard Williams, otherwise Cromwell. His son, the Golden Knight, before alluded to, erected the family mansion here. Sir Oliver, the Protector's god-father, entertained one or two of the English Monarchs at Hinchingbrooke, and afterwards it was a favourite halting place of other members of the Royal Family on their journeys to and from the north. The sumptuous manner in which King James I. was entertained here is matter of fame. Much of the present house was erected by Sir Henry Cromwell, who used for the purpose the masonry of the priory of Barnwell. It was owing to the extravagance of Sir Oliver Cromwell that he was obliged to dispose of the family estates which were purchased by Sir Sydney Montague, of Barnwell, Knight, in whose family it has since remained. It is one of the most ancient families in the country. The only son of the purchaser of the house became the first Earl of Sandwich.

It is related of this Earl that he went to sea with the Duke of York in the third Dutch war, and in the engagement in Sole bay he was in the command of the Van. He hastened out of the bay—when the enemy appeared in sight—where it would have been easy for De Ruyter with his fire ships to have de-

stroyed the fleet. He engaged in close fight, and by his bravery and disregard of all danger, he drew upon himself the bravest of the enemy. He killed Van Ghent, a Dutch Admiral, and beat off his ship; he sank another ship which ventured to come alongside him, and he sank three fire ships which attempted to grapple with him, and though his vessel was torn in pieces with shot, and of the thousand men she contained nearly 600 of them laid dead upon the deck, he continued still to thunder with his Artillery in the midst of the enemy. But another fire ship, more fortunate than the preceding, having laid hold of his vessel her destruction was now inevitable. Warned by Sir Edward Haddock, his captain, he refused to make his escape, and bravely embraced death as a shelter from the ignominy, which an expression of the Duke in a previous part of the engagement to the effect that he was more cautious than brave, he thought had thrown upon him. Thus heroically perished Earl Sandwich in the 77th year of his age. The body of the Earl was found at sea about a fortnight after the engagement, and it was honoured by a public funeral.

The more regular portion of the interior of the mansion forms a quadrangle. The great staircase is ornamented with carvings displaying shields of the Sandwich arms. In a small dressing room is a por-

trait of the third Countess of Sandwich, the eccentric daughter of the Earl of Rochester, who confined her husband for a long period in one of the upper rooms of the mansion.

It is a singular fact that most of the descendants of Oliver Cromwell died in great poverty and misery. Within a century after the death of the regicide, his grand-daughter after seeing her husband die in the workhouse of a small town in Suffolk, died herself a pauper, leaving two daughters—one of these became the wife of a shoemaker and the other of a journeyman butcher, who was her fellow servant.

In 1849 a committee was formed at St. Ives to erect a monument to the memory of Oliver Cromwell, to stand on the site of Slepe Hall, the place of Cromwell's residence at the commencement of his career. Fortunately, for the credit of the county, the proposal was not carried into effect.





## Chapter XXX.

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### STORIES OF THE FENS.

#### THE MERES AND FENS OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE.

Michael Drayton's "Poly-Albion," published in 1613, gives the following description of the Meres and Fens of Huntingdonshire, making the county of Cambridge to speak as follows, but adding in the margin that "these Meres are for the most part in Huntingdon Shire" :—

"The Horse, or other beast, o'rway'd with his owne masse,  
Lies wallowing in my Fennes, hid ower head in grasse :  
And in the place where growes ranke Fodder for my Neat,  
The Turffe which beares the Hay, is wondrous needful Peat:  
My full and batning earth, needs not the Plowmans Pains,  
The Rils which runne in me, are like the branched vaines  
In humane bodies seene ; those Ditches cut by hand,  
From the surrounding Meres, to winne the measured land  
To those choyce waters, I most fitly may compare,  
Wherewith nice women vse to blanch their Beauties rare.

Hath there a man beene borne in me, that never knew  
Of *Watersey*, the *Leame*, or th' other cal'd the *New*.  
The Frithdike neer'st my midst, and of another sort,  
Who euer fished or fowl'd, that cannot make report  
Of sundry meres at hand, vpon my Westerne way,  
As *Ramsey Mere*, and *Vg*, with the great *Whittlesey* :  
Of the abundant store of Fish and Fowle there bred,  
Which whilst of Europes Isles Great *Britaine* is the Head.  
No *Meres* shall truly tell in them, then at one draught,  
More store of either kinds hath with the Net been caught :  
Which though some pettie Isles challenge to be their owne,  
Yet must those Isles likewise acknowledge me  
their soveraigne."

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A SUBTERRANEAN FOREST.

In Elstobb's *History of the Fens* it is said:—" In the survey of the lands in Sutton and Mepal, and others adjacent, in the counties of Cambridge and Huntingdon, in the year 1750, in my perambulations over the said levels, at the bottoms and sides of many of the drains made therein, I observed multitudes of roots of large trees, standing as they had grown, at the depth of about three feet under the present moorish soil, from which their bodies had been manifestly sawn off, and some of which I then saw lying at a small distance from their roots, at the same depth before mentioned, and I was credibly informed that great numbers had been, and were still found, severed, and lying in like manner."

FATAL DISPUTE BETWEEN CLERGYMEN.

The following story is taken from the same authority:—"In the year 1256 (40 H. III.) William, Bishop of Ely, and Hugh, Abbot of Ramsey, came to an agreement upon a controversey between them, concerning the bounds of their fens, whereof in these old times a wonder happened; for whereas anciently, time out of mind, they were accessible for neither man nor beast, affording only deep mud with sedge and reeds, and possessed by birds (yea, much more, by devils, as appears in the life of St. Guthlac, who, finding it a place of horror and great solitude, began to inhabit there), is now changed into delightful meadows and arable lands; and whatever part does not produce corn or hay, does abundantly bring forth sedge, turf, and other fuel, very useful to the borderers; which occasioned much dispute and contention between those who were the most ancient inhabitants in those parts; nay, quarrels and fighting concerning the bounds of such fruitful lands. For so it happened that on the feast day of St. Peter, *ad vincula*, two of the canons of the Priory of the Holy Trinity, London, disputing about their limits, rose to such high words as contracted such an implacable hatred between them, so that studying revenge, the one took an opportunity to murder the other."

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THE FEN ON FIRE.

During the dry year of 1871, an episode occurred which might have led to disastrous effects. In the parish of Conington Moor weeds were burned by the side of a fen ditch, and the fire was permitted to smoulder till the turf below the surface became ignited, and the fire was communicated to the adjoining fields. The travellers along the Great Northern Railway in the night time during the year will remember the little hillocks of flame that burst from the surface of the soil, and over a considerable acreage made a brilliant display. No efforts on the part of the occupier availed to extinguish the burning over the farm, and for some time the buildings and stacks were threatened by its gradual approach. After a conflagration which continued for several weeks, the rain fortunately extinguished it.

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WHITTLESEA MERE DRIED BY THE HEAT.

During the year 1826 Whittlesea Mere was quite dry, and every fish perished. They laid like heaps of snow on the north shore. The season was hot, and a large proportion of the bed of the Mere was without water. In the mud were large cracks and fissures; and when about a hundred acres of water remained, a great hurricane of wind came and blew most of it into the cracks and fissures, and it disappeared. Many tons of eels,

carp, pike, and perch were taken. The water returned in the winter, but there was no fishing for five or six years. The Mere, however, was stocked with fish from the rivers, especially from Bevill's Leam.

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LAKE FESTIVITIES.

Whittlesea Mere, on the day following the anniversary of Yaxley feast, used to exhibit a scene of great festivity. On the 9th of June, 1840, it is recorded that "as usual," vessels belonging to Mr. Buckle, Mr. Sherred, Mr. Richardson, and others, were fitted up in admirable style for sailing parties. The morning was fine, and the surface of the lake was covered by about 80 pleasure boats, of various sizes and descriptions, containing, by calculation, 1,000 persons, many of whom were fashionable and well dressed ladies. They assembled at the rallying point at the south side of the Mere. When, however, merriment was at its highest, a fearful thunderstorm occurred, the ladies dresses were literally drenched, the boats became half filled with water, and the only alternative was to re-cross the Mere from the point at which they had assembled.

On the 11th of August, 1842, the Mere presented an animated scene. It was the day appointed for a match between the three boats, The Lady of the Lake, the Monarch, and the Champion. The first was owned by Mr. Waite, of Yaxley, and he was the captain, Captain

Ewart had charge of the *Monarch*, and Mr. Mowbray was captain of the *Champion*. Each boat contained several ladies, and the respective parties at three o'clock landed at the Point, and dined *al fresco*. The *Lady of the Lake* was pronounced the victor, she having made considerably nearer to the wind than the others. The serene dignity with which she entered the mouth of the Mere was allowed by several gentlemen who were spectators to be one of the most imposing sights they had for a long time witnessed. A band of music was in attendance.

The annual regatta on the Mere is thus reported in the *Stamford Mercury*, on the 11th June, 1844:—"On Tuesday the celebration of this annual regatta took place with the usual spirit. The *Monarch*, as before, won the laurel for sailing under Commodore Royce, Captain Ewart, and Lieutenant Moore, outstripping the other numerous craft. Fortunately no accident occurred to damp the hilarity of the day." The same journal in reporting the regatta in 1847, says that "there were upwards of 2,000 persons on the Mere, and upwards of 50 small and large craft, well rigged, and with captains, lieutenants, and minor officers." The *Monarch* was again the winner.

In December, 1844, the whole surface of the Mere was covered with ice, which very rarely happened. It is recorded that about 6,000 persons were present,

amongst them being Lord Milton, Hon. G. Fitzwilliam, Hon. C. Fitzwilliam, Mr. Heathcote, of Connington; Mr. Sherard, of Glatton; Mr. Smith, of Oundle; Revs. Sympson, E. R. Theed, Cope, Coy, Cookson, and Messrs. Compton, Tomlin, Bird, Fawkes, Whitwell, Atkinson, Porter, &c. Sledges conveyed many ladies to and fro, and in various parts were seen retailers of beer and spirits. The ice was surprisingly strong. At one time a fight happened, and about 1,000 people congregated in a mass. Several skating matches were held during the week on the Mere. In 1840 the Mere was frozen over, and it was then said that 10,000 persons assembled on it. In January, 1841, a variety of skating matches occurred on it.

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HOW WHITTLESEA MERE DISAPPEARED.

An article in the Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, in 1860, states that in the summer of 1851 the preparations for draining the Mere were so far advanced that the moment for emptying had arrived, and accordingly a point nearest to one of the exterior rivers having been chosen, the bank was cut, and the long pent up waters allowed a free passage to the sea. Long before the last pools of water had disappeared from off the bed of the Mere, large crowds of people from all the surrounding neighbourhood, and even many from distant parts of the Fens, had as-

sembled. Some, perhaps, from a desire to be present at the last moments of a venerable friend, whose fortunes were now reduced to the lowest ebb. Others, perhaps, with whom the love of stewed eels preponderated over sentiment, from a prospect of a ready and abundant gratification of their taste. Of the hundreds—it would be no exaggeration, probably, to say thousands—who had assembled, nine out of ten came provided with sacks and baskets, to carry off their share of the vast number of fish which, wherever the eye turned, were floundering in the ever decreasing water. Some more ambitious speculators brought their carts, and gathering the fish by the ton weight, despatched them for sale to Birmingham and Manchester. Contrary to expectation, no fish of very great size were taken; the largest known was a pike of 22lbs. So deep and tenacious was the mud, that even with boards attached to the soles of the shoe, it was a matter of extreme labour to move about; and an undue anxiety to secure a lively eel or vigorous jack was sure to lead to an irrecoverable downfall, or to a set-fast in some ungainly position. It is impossible to imagine a more singular scene, and as the fading light of a blood red sunset fell on the vast multitude of figures scattered in all directions over the dreary waste of slimy ooze, it left on the mind the same sort of impression of the supernatural as is left by some of Martin's ambitious



pictures. By the middle of Dec., in 1851, a 25-horse power engine, capable of lifting 16,000 gallons of water a minute, had been fixed and ready for use, and it was not long before its capabilities were put to the test. The great expanse of mud which had formed the bed of the lake, had during the summer been formed into something like a tract of agricultural land. Dykes were made, roads marked out, boundaries of farms arranged, and in some cases the terms for letting the embryo farms actually agreed upon, when on the 12th of November, the water in the outer rivers being swollen by heavy rains and pressing against the newly formed banks with a force they were unable to withstand, a breach was made, and in a few hours Whittlesea Mere was itself again. Disheartening as this event was, it showed—fortunately at the least calamitous moment that it could have occurred—where the weak point was. The pump was set to work, and it took three weeks to exhaust the water, when the land, but certainly not *terra firma*, was again everywhere visible. Innumerable ditches were formed, with the result that as the mud dried great cracks and fissures appeared. For some time the mud would not allow the weight of a man, and even when boards were strapped to the feet it was a matter of great difficulty and danger to walk over it. For a year or two after it would not bear a horse, and consequently it was

extremely difficult to make any headway with agriculture. Had boards been affixed to the horses hoofs the experiment would have been dangerous, owing to the wide fissures that had been formed. The whole area, therefore, for a time had to be prepared for cultivation by hand. Of such a depth were the cracks that after the area had been dug and forked over for several years the ugly scars still remained. When all these difficulties had been overcome, the soil was found to be rich, and largely impregnated with animal matter, so that the wind, which in the autumn of 1851 was curling the blue waters of the lake, was, in the autumn of 1853, blowing in the same place over fields of yellow corn.

After the Mere had been drained, various articles in gold and silver were taken from the bed. Among other things a gold censer, which the Marquis of Northampton endeavoured to secure for the British Museum; also very many swords, all of which were covered with fresh water mussels. A valuable chandelier was also found, which, when lighted up, represented the west front of Peterborough Cathedral.



## Chapter XXX.

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### THE SOMERSHAM BATHS.

In Dr. Layard's account of the Somersham water, he says that the county of Huntingdon contains several springs suitable for medicinal purposes. Camden gives the earliest account of the purgative salt waters at Hailweston, and a late writer in 1720 mentions that St. Neots and St. Ives were famous for medicinal water; but as no springs of such a nature existed in his time (1767), he thinks it is probable that they became noted by the residence of such persons who came to drink and use the purging Hailweston water, either internally or outwardly, or by those who came to drink the chalybeate waters on Somersham Heath. Dr. Layard observes that Camden takes no notice of the pure and excellent water, known at Huntingdon by

the name of the Huntingdon Horse Common Water, of the pure limpid spring in Holywell Churchyard, or of the chalybeate waters of Nill Well, or St. Agnes' Well in Papworth St. Agnes, at Elton Hall, and other light chalybeate springs rising in Salome Wood, and many other places, nor did he probably know of a very strong briny spring in a close at Bury, near Ramsey. He goes on to say that for medicinal purposes the waters chiefly to be recommended in this county are the Horse Common water at Huntingdon, the Hailweston water, and the Somersham Water. The latter, he says, issues from the declivity of a small hill on a heath near the highroad between St. Ives and Somersham. This heath was formerly covered by part of the royal forests, cut down in the reign of Henry II., III., or of Edward I. Neither by record nor tradition is it known when the Somersham water was first discovered. The earliest account to be depended upon is that the Somersham water having been drunk at the end of the 17th century, but afterwards neglected, was revived under the patronage of Dr. More, Bishop of Ely. About 1720, the Duke of Manchester, Lord Hinchbrook, Dr. Wake, Bishop of Lincoln, with other principal residents in the county, joined in a subscription for erecting a house near the spring, which was fitted up with a bowling green, and other accommodations. Many persons came to St. Ives, Somersham, and to the

pleasant villages of Earith, Colne, Pidley, Woodhurst, and Old Hurst to reside during the summer and drink this water, others sent for it to Ely, Cambridge, and even to some distant parts of Lincolnshire and Norfolk, where it was drank not only as a medicine, but at table mixed with wine. Some having injudiciously drank the water while suffering from stone or gravel and having died, a report was spread that the water produced stone diseases, and all that could be said in its defence by physicians was to no purpose. The torrent of prejudice could not be stemmed, the spring became totally neglected, and so few persons continued the use of the water, that the attendants' profit being very small the house fell to ruin, and the materials were removed. However, a good opinion was still entertained of the Somersham water, from its manifest success in many families, and in 1758 a subscription list was opened to erect a house and proper accommodation near the spring, and a committee of management was appointed. Dr. Layard furnishes the rules which were adopted for regulating the Spa, and also gives the directions for using the water.



## Chapter XXXI.

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### THE PROTESTANT NUNNERY.

In the hilliest part of the county, Alconbury brook running on the east, and a rising highland on the west, are grouped together a collection of villages under the name of Gidding, one being distinguished from the other by the titles of Steeple, Great, and Little. The last-named, and the smallest of the three, consisting only of about a dozen cottages and a farmhouse or two, has attracted to itself more notice than any of the others, on account of the settlement in it, in the early part of the 17th century, of a religious establishment which became known throughout England under the name of the Protestant Nunnery. Travellers on the Great North Road turned aside to see it, Protestant Church dignitaries, and even King Charles the First himself being amongst the number.

**THE**  
**ARMINIAN**  
**NUNNERY:**

**OR,**  
**A BRIEF DESCRIPTION**  
and Relation of the late created *Mo-*  
*nastical* Place, called the **ARMINIAN**  
**NUNNERY** at little **GIDDING** in  
**HUNTINGTON-SHIRE.**

*Humbly recommended to the wise consideration*  
*of this present* **PARLIAMENT.**

The Foundation is by a Company of **FARRARS**  
at **GIDDING.**



Printed for *Thomas Underhill.* **MDCXLI.**

THE ARMINIAN NUNNERY.

Fac Simile of Title Page of Original Pamphlet, in the  
possession of Lord Esmé Stuart Gordon.





The Ferrars derived their descent from Walkeline de Ferrariis, who came into England with the Conqueror, and whose descendants branched out into several different counties. One line settled in Yorkshire, from which sprang Nicholas Ferrar, Esquire, a merchant adventurer of great repute in the City of London; whose table was frequented by those distinguished seamen Hawkins, Drake, and Raleigh. He married Mary, daughter of Lawrence Wodenoth, Esq., of the ancient family of that name, who had been seated at Savington Hall, Cheshire, nearly 500 years. They had several children, the fourth of whom was Nicholas, the founder of the society at Gidding. He was born on February 22nd, 1592, in the parish of St. Mary Stayning, Mark Lane, London. His mind was early imbued with the principles of virtue and piety, by the conversation and example of his parents; and being fond of learning, he acquired a rapid knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages. In his fourteenth year he was admitted to Clare College, Cambridge, of which he afterwards became Fellow. In 1613 he took the degree of M.A., and in the same year he commenced to travel on the Continent, where he not only acquired a knowledge of low and high Dutch, Italian, French, and Spanish, but witnessing the great fervour and religious perfection of the monks and nuns of the religious orders in the latter countries, he became

inflamed with a holy admiration for their state of life, and resolved on the first opportunity to imitate their example. He studied at the Universities of Leipsic in Germany, and Padua in Italy. After his return to England he was appointed King's Counsel for the Virginia Plantation, in place of his brother John, who had been promoted Deputy Governor of the Virginia Company. To this office Nicholas succeeded about three years afterwards, but he did not hold it long, for King James I., in 1623, had the Charter of the Company declared "null and void." He was elected a member of Parliament in the following year, but shortly afterwards retired from public life, and resolved to live in a state of retirement, and imitate as far as possible the order and rule which he had noticed to be observed in the religious houses of the Continent. With this object in view he purchased the lordship of Little Gidding.

His brother John, and his mother, 73 years of age, with her daughter and son-in-law, and their numerous family, settled at Gidding in 1625, the community, with servants, numbering nearly 40 persons. The following year Nicholas Ferrar was ordained deacon, and he restored the Church and repaired the Manor House. The house being very large, and containing many apartments, Mr. Ferrar allotted one great room for family devotions. This he called the oratory.

Adjoining it were two other convenient rooms, one used as a night oratory for the men, and the other a night oratory for the women. He also set out a chamber and closet for each of his nephews and nieces; three more he reserved for the masters whom he had provided for teaching as well the children of the family as those of the inhabitants of the neighbouring places. His own lodgings were so contrived that he could conveniently see that everything was conducted with decency and order. He also laid out the garden in a beautiful manner.

The regularity of the arrangements, and the exactness with which the rules were observed, attracted general attention. The name given to it by the people of the neighbourhood was "The Protestant Nunnery."

Chapters out of Fuller's "Holy State," or, as some affirm (including Dr. Peckard and Mr. Bingley), out of works written by Mr. Ferrar himself, and which were adopted by Mr. Fuller afterwards, were read at regular intervals.

In May, 1633, King Charles made his first visit to the Protestant Nunnery, and again in April, 1646. On the occasion of his first visit he was delighted with what he saw, and at his Majesty's request Mr. Ferrar wrote "The Harmony of the Evangelists," and a commentary on the Books of the Kings, for his Majesty's use. Frequent communications afterwards passed

between the King and the family at the Protestant Nunnery.

Mr. Ferrar did not live long under the rule he had established. In 1637, eleven years after adopting the semi-conventional style of life, he died, his death being, it is stated, accelerated by the mortifications and austerities which he practised in imitation of the members of religious orders, but which, not being moderated by obedience to superiors, and that prudence which regulates such matters in the houses of religious orders, his zeal carried him beyond discretion. Towards the close of his life he was accustomed to wrap himself up in a loose frieze gown, and sleep on the boards, with only a bear's skin to cover him. He also denied himself sleep for three nights in the week, "watching" those nights in the oratory, in imitation of those monks and nuns who never allow an hour in the day or night to pass but some member of their order is watching in front of the Tabernacle. His nephew also succumbed to the vigorous rule imposed on the members of the family, but not before he had composed several works for the use of Prince Charles. Both Nicholas Ferrar and his nephew had the makings of true religious men, and had they adopted the rule of one of the religious orders then in existence, and learned the practice of austerities suitable to their health and condition, might have lived in the

service of God to a good old age. Their manner of life, however, was too singular, and their austerities being under no prudent control, became in a measure fanaticism.

King Charles' second visit to the Protestant Nunnery was nine years after the death of Mr. Nicholas Ferrar, and five years after the death of the nephew. The mother had also died at the age of 83 since his first visit. The King was making his secret journey northwards to place himself under the protection of the Scotch army, and knowing the friendliness of the Ferrar family, he might take refuge at their house. He travelled with Dr. Hudson from Downham, in Norfolk, and reached Gidding on May 2nd, 1646. Mr. John Ferrar was then the head of the family, and he received his Majesty with becoming respect and loyalty. Fearing, however, that the known adhesion of the Ferrar's to the Royal cause might make their house an unsafe refuge for his Majesty, the King was accordingly conducted to a private house at Coppingford, where he slept that night in safety, and then went on to Stamford.

During the Civil Wars many falsehoods were circulated by Puritanical zealots respecting the establishment at Gidding, as they are still circulated by the descendants of the Puritans with respect to all similar institutions. The appellation of Nunnery, which the

people had applied to the establishment, was quite sufficient to arouse the bigotry of the Puritans, and a party of these hypocritical and not too honest gentlemen resolved—of course, in the interests of religious liberty—to plunder the home of the Ferrars. The members of the family, however, had notice of their intention, and thought it prudent to fly, that they might, as to their persons at least, escape the intended violence. The attacking party—which consisted of some soldiers of the Parliament army—ransacked both the Church and the mansion. In doing this, they exhibited a special spite against the organ, which they broke into pieces, making a large fire of the wood and roasting several sheep which they had killed in the grounds. They then seized all the plate, furniture, and provisions which they could conveniently carry away, and in the general devastation which resulted the manuscripts of Mr. Nicholas Ferrar were destroyed.

The house of the Ferrars does not now exist, but its site may be discerned. Many of the materials, however which composed it are still to be found in the structures of the few cottages which constitute the village of Little Gidding.

A tractate concerning this institution was published in 1641, and the following are extracts from it:—  
“The Arminian Nunnerey: or a briefe description and

relation of the late erected Monasticall place, called the Arminian Nunnery, at Little Gidding, in Huntingdon-Shire. The Foundation is by a Company of Farrars, at Gidding. There stands a faire Hovse well scituated, with a fine grove and sweet walks Letticed and Gardined on both sides; their livelihood or Revenew about 500*l.* per annum. One of my Lord Montagues Mansion-Houses being within two or three miles off called Hemmington House, not farre from Oundle. A gentleman coming to visit the said House was first brought to faire spacious Parlour, where soone after appeared the old Gentlewomans second sonne, a Batchelour of a plain perence, but pregnant of speech and parts, unto whom when I had deprecated and excused my selfe for so sudder and bold a visit, he entertained me with seeming civilitie and humilitie. After deprecations and some complements past betwixt us, he said I should see his Mother if I pleased, and I shewing my desire, hee went up into a chamber, and presently returned with his Mother (a tall ancient Gentlewoman, about 80 years of age), shee being Matron of the House, his elder brother a Priest-like man in habit and haire. Now he had a sister married in the house to one Mr. Cooles, who had 14 or 15 Children in the House, and of these, with a man servant and 2 or 3 maid-servants, the family then consisted. I was permitted to salute the mother and daughters as



we use to salute other women ; and after we were all sitten circular, I had leave to speake ingenuously of what I had heard and did or might conceive of their House. I first told him what I had heard of the Nunns of Gidding; of two watching and praying all night; of their Canonick houres; of their crosses on the outside and inside of the Chappell; of an altar richly decked with tapestry, Plate, and Tapers; of their adorations, genuflections, and geniculations, which I told them plainly might strongly savour of superstition and Popery. Now you must understand that the younger brother who first came unto me is a jolly pragmaticall and priest-like fellow, and is the mouth for all the rest, and he began to cut me off, and answered with a serious protestation (though not so properly) that he did as verily believe the Pope to be Antichrist, as any article of his Faith, which I noted and gave the hearing; and therein if he spake from his heart he much differed from the opinions of Priest Shelford,\* Priest Squire, Dr. Brassy, the red dragon of Arminians, and other eminent Arminians. He denied the place to be a Nunnery, and that none of his Neeces were Nunnes; but he confessed that two of his nieces had lived the one thirty, the other thirty and

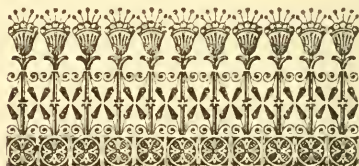
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\*Martyrs of the Roman Catholic Religion in England. They were executed for their adherence to the old faith at the time of the Reformation.



two yeares Virgins, and so resolved to continue (as he hoped they would) to give themselves to Fasting and Prayers; but had made no vowes. For their canonicall houres, he said they usually prayed 6 times a day, viz., 2 times a day publikly in the Chappel, and 4 times a day more privately in the House; in the chappel after the Order of the Booke of Common Prayer, at both times chanting out aloud the Letany; and in their House particular private Prayers for a Family. . . . . This Prolocutor confessed himself to bee about 42 yeares of age, was a fellow in a House in Cambridge (he named not what House), and that he had taken Orders of a Deacon (but he said nothing of his having bene at Rome, as it is well knowne he hath bene). Now, I was invited by this Deacon to go with him into the chappell to their devotions, at the entrance whereof this priest-like deft Deacon made a low obeysance, a few paces farther lower, and coming to the halfe place, which is at the east end where the altered table stood, hee bowed and prostrated himselfe to the ground; then he went up into a faire large reading place (having placed mee above with a faire large window cushion of green velvet before me). The Mother Matron with all her 'Traine, which were her daughters and daughter's daughters, who, with foure sonnes, kneeled all the while on the body of the halfe place, all being in black gownes, and as they came to

Church in round Monmouth capps, all I say in black, save one of the daughters who was in a Friars grey gowne. . . . . It seems, moreover, that at their monthly receiving the Sacrament (which this defendant deacon performeth and consecrateth the bread and wine) their servants when they received were attended by their Master and Mistris, and not suffered to lay or take away their owne trenchers, as it is reported."



## Chapter XXXIII.

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### THE BLACK BOTTLE OF MOSELLE.

Passing along the Valley of the Ouse from St. Neots, with the river on the left and the rising hills on the right, and surrounded on all sides with some of the prettiest scenery in the county, the traveller arrives at Paxton. For many years the Reynolds family have had their seat here. In 1840, the name of Captain R. A. Reynolds, the then head of the family, became a household word throughout the kingdom. He joined the army in 1825, and served his Sovereign and country for about 15 years, earning the good opinion of some of the best and bravest officers in the service. He was attached to the 11th Hussars (Prince Albert's Own), and, after about 13 years service, most of it in India,

he returned with his regiment to England. Lord Cardigan was the Lieutenant-Colonel of the regiment. One day, shortly after the return of the regiment, Lord Cardigan sent an uncourteous message, respecting *ing* the introduction of some Moselle in a black bottle at the mess-table, to Captain R. A. Reynolds. That gentleman told the messenger, another officer of the regiment, Captain Jones, that he should consider him responsible if he delivered any more similar messages. One of the offensive expressions used by Lord Cardigan to Captain Reynolds was that he was "an Indian officer." Thus following the example of Napoleon, who contemptuously designated the Duke of Wellington "A General of Sepoys."

Shortly afterwards, in August, 1840, Lord Cardigan gave a private party at his house at Brighton. Amongst the guests was a young lady, who, after dancing had commenced, accosted Lord Cardigan with the question:

"I do not see Captain Reynolds present, where is he?"

"I have not invited him," replied Lord Cardigan.

"Why not?" said the fair examiner.

"Because," replied his lordship, "I don't happen to be on good terms with him, and if you are anxious to see him, you are not very likely to meet him here."

"Why are you not on good terms?" persisted the lady, with genuine curiosity.

"Oh, that is a very long story, and I don't wish to

enter into it; but he shall never enter my house again as long as he lives.”

This conversation was overheard, and Captain Reynolds was informed of it. He considered the last expression cast a serious imputation upon his honour, and he therefore wrote to Lord Cardigan stating what had been reported to him, and asking permission to contradict it. Lord Cardigan took no notice of the letter; but on the following morning, August 28th, when the regiment was formed for field exercise, he called Captain Reynolds out, away from the regiment, and in the presence of the Adjutant and Captain Jones, addressed him as follows:—“Captain Reynolds, I yesterday received a communication from you, to which I beg to inform you I have no reply whatever to make, inasmuch as I consider it was a letter of an improper nature for you to address to me, and I have to request that in future all communications from you to me may be strictly official, with my military rank affixed to the address, and your own to your signature.”

This act of the Lieutenant-Colonel, in making what was a purely personal matter between two gentlemen a subject for military discipline, was reprehensible in the extreme. Having cast the imputation upon Captain Reynolds, he could not draw from it, and he was thus apparently afraid of facing the consequences. After such treatment, no doubt Captain Reynolds burned

with indignation, and after the exercise he wrote the following letter:—

“ August 28th, 1840.

“ My Lord,—Having in my letter to your lordship of yesterday stated to your lordship that a report had reached me that your lordship had spoken of me in such a manner as I deem prejudicial to me, considering the position in which I am placed ; and having, in the most respectful manner, requested your lordship to allow me to contradict such report, and your lordship having this morning positively refused to give me any answer, I beg to tell your lordship that you are in no wise justified in speaking of me at all at a public party given by your lordship, and more particularly in such a manner as to make it appear that my conduct has been such as to exclude me from your lordship’s house. Such assertions are calculated to injure me. Your lordship’s reputation as a professed duellist, founded on having sent Major Jenkins to offer satisfaction to Mr. Brent, the miller, of Canterbury, and your also having sent Captain Forrest to London to call out an attorney’s clerk, does not admit of your privately offering insult to me, and then screening yourself under the cloak of commanding officer; and I must be allowed to tell your lordship that it would far better become you to select a man whose hands are untied for the object of your lordship’s vindictive reproaches, or to act as many a more gallant fellow than yourself has done, and waive that rank which your wealth and earldom alone entitle you to hold.

I am, my lord, your lordship’s obedient servant,

RICHARD ANTHONY REYNOLDS.

The Right Hon. the Earl of Cardigan,  
45, Brunswick Square, Brighton.”

On receipt of this letter Lord Cardigan asked for a court martial, charging Captain Reynolds with disobedience to his orders, in having written "a most disrespectful, insubordinate, offensive, and insulting letter," in direct violation of his command that all letters addressed to him by Captain Reynolds should be of an official character. The court martial was held on September 25th, 1840, at Brighton, and after various adjournments it was finally decided that Captain Reynolds should be cashiered. The sentence was received on all sides with a chorus of dissent. The *London Times*, and almost every journal in the country, condemned the decision as monstrously unjust. The letter was an indiscreet one, but there had been considerable provocation, and a reprimand on a brave and gallant officer would have amply met the justice of the case. Lord Cardigan, however, did not escape without an official reprimand. So general and so earnest was the public in Captain Reynolds' behalf, that he was compelled to write to the *Times* begging that the proposal to present him with a public testimonial might not be persisted in. At Brighton Lord Cardigan was burnt in effigy, in company, it was said, with the very black bottle, bearing the word "Moselle," which had been the *fons et origo* of the whole thing.

After a time Captain Reynolds' commission was restored to him by Royal authority.

## Chapter XXXIII.

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### HUNTINGDONSHIRE FOLK LORE.

On December 18th, 1886, the River Nene was covered with large masses of ice, which were floating down the stream, somewhat swollen by previous rains. They were not sheets or solid blocks, but apparently collections of innumerable small particles, as if larger pieces had been ground into atoms and then thrown into the stream, congregating again in masses. "That, sir," said a Huntingdonshire miller, "is due to the anchor frost." The writer asked what he meant by anchor frost, for he had never heard the expression before. "An anchor frost is always like that," he replied, "the ice is formed in the bed of the river, and rising to the surface floats. The writer attempted to convince him that such a thing was contrary to every



known law in chemistry, but he persisted in it, and said that millers disliked nothing so much as an anchor frost, as it frequently interfered with the proper working of the water wheel. It was, however, not of long duration. An anchor frost never continued longer than three days. Another man also stated that the phenomenal aspect of the stream was due to "anchor frost." The writer published a letter in the *Peterborough Advertiser* mentioning the above facts, and the communication produced the following remarks in the same journal the subsequent week, from a correspondent at Earith:—"The question as to the reality of what are called anchor frosts is continually cropping up. Some say there is such a thing as the formation of the ice at the bottom of a river or other water, while others as stoutly maintain that it is impossible. Without advocating either view I will relate what occurred here (Earith) last week. For two or three days masses of ice came floating down the river and choked up the Causeway between the two bridges. This ice was of a formation altogether different in appearance from the ice on the surface of the water in the fens and washes. None of the ice in the fens and washes had broken up, so it could not have floated from those places. Asking an old inhabitant about the matter, he said, "Oh, that is anchor ice, it comes from the bottom of the river." It is so called and described by

all the old boatmen of this place. Along the banks of the Old Bedford here, close to the edge of the water, is to be seen a collection of shells, bits of coal and other things deposited there by the ice called here "anchor ice." Among other things brought up is a piece of Roman pottery, and a walking stick with ferrule all complete, which seems to have lain at the bottom of the river for a long time. The theory is that the ice forms at the bottom of the river, encloses these things within its grasp, and when the ice breaks loose and floats, these objects are carried with it and deposited on the banks when the ice thaws. The stick, pottery, and shells are here to be seen, and their presence in the places where they are found certainly seems to favour the idea that such a thing as 'anchor frost' does exist."

"I write this note from a Huntingdonshire village," says Cuthbert Bede in *Notes and Queries*, "where there are some cases of small pox. An old cottager told me that the best way to prevent the disease from spreading was to open the window of the sick room at sunset, in order to admit the gnats, who would load themselves with the infection and then fly forth and die. 'Smoking, and whitewash, and tar-water are fools to them gnats,' said my informant, who placed the most implicit reliance on his scrap of folk lore."

A young woman named Stacey got into trouble at

Middlemoore, in February, 1861, through adopting a folk lore remedy for fits. She went round the neighbourhood with this paper: "By the order of Mr. Bates that this paper should be drawed up for the purpose of Banishing of my Fits from me, Mr. Bates saith that thare is but one more remedy for Cure Of them but this, that is i have to gather 9 sixpenses From 9 sepprate marred men, it must be the men that gives me it Or it will have no effect on my fits and i hope tha All that takes it intrust to this thing may never fall A victem to this awful Complaint nor yet others for A few days A Go they that held me expected every moment Being my last and Mr. Bates saith by doing this i shall loose them be so kind As to put your Names down so that thare is no more than the 9 6d. Gathered theas are to make A ring on for me to ware. Miss Stacey, Midlemoor." Mr. C. P. Bates naturally resented this unauthorised use of his name, and summoned the girl before the Ramsey magistrates, who reprimanded her. Nevertheless, she collected the magical number of sixpences from "9 marred men," in strict accordance with the exacting terms of the recipe, and they were converted into the necessary ring.

A gentleman travelling near St. Neots asked a countryman what was the name of the town. "Woy, sir," he replied, "Some calls it Sneets, some Snotes, oi calls it Snotes."

In Huntingdonshire, according to Cuthbert Bede in *Notes and Queries*, the mulberry tree is called the wise tree, because, unlike other trees, it never puts forth buds until all the frosts have ceased. "I was talking to-day (April 20th, 1865)," writes Cuthbert Bede, "with a Huntingdonshire cottager, and was saying how cold the day had been after our previous hot weather. 'Yes,' said my friend, 'You mustn't expect the summer to come all at once: the wise tree would have told you better than that. I was up agen the hall this morning, and saw those two wise trees that grow nigh to the fish stews, and they hadn't put out a morsel o' show.' 'And what tree may the wise tree be,' I asked. 'It's what some folks call the mulberry,' was the reply, 'but the wise tree is the name as I've always known it by ever since I was a child.' 'And why do you call it the wise tree?' 'Why, because it isn't silly like some other trees as puts out their leaves early and then gets them nipped; but the wise tree, on the contrary, always waits till the frosses has gone right away, and ain't to be deceived by a stroke o' fine weather coming early in the season; but when its sartin sure that it be fine weather and well settled, then it puts out its leaves. Oh, yes, sir, you may rest content on the wise tree telling you may be safe against frosses."

The custom frequently met with amongst the

residents in villages in England of selling a wife, has been observed in Huntingdonshire, as the following incident will show:—A labouring man residing at Ramsey, having for a considerable time left his wife, returned on December 29th, 1821, to find her in the situation as housekeeper to one of his neighbours. On claiming her a quarrel ensued, the result being that an agreement was come to that the husband should sell his wife for five shillings, and deliver her to the purchaser, the one whose house she was keeping in Huntingdon Market Place. Before the ceremony took place the parties were, much to their surprise, taken into custody, and carried before the magistrates, who, finding they had acted from ignorance of the law, which they had supposed rather sanctioned than prohibited such contracts, allowed the parties, on being bound over for good behaviour, to go home.

A curious instance of the observance of the leap year privilege is recorded at King's Ripton in 1824. Miss Porter, the well favoured daughter of a respectable farmer, having placed her affections on a man-servant named Wootton, employed on a neighbouring farm, who was the son of an itinerant rag and bone collector, resolved to take advantage of the privilege accorded to her sex in leap year. She accordingly sent one of her father's servants for the favoured youth. The moment he came in view she ran into the yard to meet

him, exclaiming, "Tom, will you have me?" The youth agreed, and the father of the young lady having regard to the custom of leap year raised no objection, but sent for the necessary licence, and the two were married on the following Christmas morning.

There is a curious old custom which is still annually observed at the village of Old Weston. The practice is to strew the floor of the parish church with newly-cut grass on the feast Sunday. A lady left by will a parcel of land for this purpose. The grass was to be cut for this particular day, when the congregation was supposed to be large, and the object, it is said was to drown or minimize the noise which the people made by squeaking boots as they entered and left the church, and which it is said very much annoyed this lady and disturbed the service. There is a tablet in the church recording the gift for the observance of the custom, but it is undecipherable through age. The bequest is now only a small piece of land, but it is believed to have been very much larger before the enclosure.

"Going a Gooding" was formerly a well observed custom in Stilton. A notice of it, in 1874, says: "Years ago one was delighted to see the old folks, in their red cloaks, collecting from charitably disposed persons in the village; but for the last two years money has been collected by persons authorised to do

so, and tickets for mutton, &c., have been given, varying in value from 1lb. to 2lb. each." "Going a Gooding" was an observance of St. Thomas' Day.

The following lines are well known in the county:—

"Crowland, as courteous as courteous may bee,  
Thorney the bane of many a good tree,  
Ramsey the rich, and Peterboro' the Proude :  
Sawtry by the way, that poor Abbey, gave more  
alms than all they."

Or, as they appear in another form:—

Ramsey the rich, of gold and fee ;  
Thorney, the grower of many a fair tree ;  
Croyland, the courteous of their meat and drink ;  
Spalding, the gluttons, as men do think ;  
Peterborough, the proud ;  
Sawtry—by the way—  
That old abbaye,  
Gave more alms than all they.

The following lines are still remembered in several villages in the county:—

Lutton Hill, Yaxley Still Mill,  
And Whittlesey Mere,  
Are the three wonders of Huntingdonshire.



## Chapter XXXV.

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### ORIGIN OF THE COUNTY PLACE NAMES.

*Alconbury*: In Domesday this is spelt *Acumesberie* and *Almundeberie*. *Alman* or *Almond* was a furnace used by refiners, and therefore *Alconbury* was probably a place for coining or casting metals.

*Alwalton*: In Domesday this place is spelled *Alwoltune*. It is probably a corruption from *Ael Avon*, the brow of the river. The *Nene* was originally called *Avon* or *Aufona*, but the early British called all their rivers by that name. This explanation exactly accords with the situation of *Alwalton*, for it is a village situated on a brow overlooking the *Nene*.

*Bluntisham*: In Domesday this is written *Bluntisham* and *Bluntesham*. It is possibly a British word with a Saxon termination. *Bol* is a head, or something



high, and *Isca* a river or water. The English termination of *ham* was subsequently added.

*Barham*: According to Spelman, Berewica is a town or hamlet separated from the manor, and as Barham is a hamlet to Spaldwick, this sufficiently explains the origin of the name.

*Bodsey*: Possibly took its name from Queen Boadicea, as it was in her Kingdom. It is locally pronounced as if spelled Botsea.

*Brampton*: *Bram* means castle or tower near stagnant water. The *p* has been subsequently added, as it has in Northampton or Southampton.

*Botolph Bridge*: No doubt took its name from St. Botolph, who lived in the vicinity, and in whose honour a church was erected on the spot, traces of which still exist.

*Buckden*: In Domesday Buchetone, and this affords an explanation of the origin of the name, viz., Buck's town.

*Brington*: This has been variously spelt. In Domesday it is Breninctune, in Dugdale it is Bremtune. *C* and *g* with the Saxons were convertible letters. *Brinct* means an abrupt edge of a brook or a river, thus Brington would mean a town on the edge of a brook.

*Broughton*: In Domesday, Brocktune, that is, Brooktown.

*Buckworth*: Like Buckden, this village stands high. In the glossary of Speaght's Chaucer *worth* means mounted. This may therefore mean the Buck's hill. In Domesday it is Bucheworde, which would represent the buck's pasturage.

*Bury*: This is often locally written Berry. Probably it has its origin like all similar place names, in having once been a fortification. It is practically the same word as borough, or burgh.

*Catworth*: In Domesday Book this is spelt Cateworde, and Dugdale writes it Cattewrda. The termination no doubt refers to the lofty situation of the village, as in Buckworth. The first syllable may refer to the fact that it was a colony of the Catti, or Cattienchlani; but, as an alternative suggestion, it is possible that Catus, who so harassed Britain with taxes and prosecutions as to bring on the entire revolt of this part of the country, may have lived or built here.

*Caldecote*: Dugdale writes this Calikeota, but in Domesday Book it is spelt exactly as we find it now. *Ceald*, in Anglo-Saxon, was cold, and *cote* was a cottage or place of residence, as we now use the word in dovecote, the home of the doves. It thus means cold cottage, or the house in an exposed situation. Coldharborough has a similar derivation.

*Conington*: In Domesday Book this appears as Coninctune. As was stated in the case of Brington,

*c* and *g* were convertible letters, so also were *c* and *k*. This, therefore, brings the word to be obviously the same as our modern Kingston. King Canute made a present of this lordship to Turkil, the famous Dane, and therefore it was part of Canute's patrimony as King.

*Coppingford*: This has been variously spelled Coupmannesford, Copemanforde, and Copingford. *Cop*, in Anglo-Saxon, meant an apex or head, and *man* in British was a place. It meant, therefore, a high place near a ford.

*Chesterton*: In Domesday Book it is written Cestretune. It was formerly a Roman station. *Castrum* was a castle or fortress, or in the plural a camp. *Ton*, the same with *Tuyn*, in the Netherlands was a hedge, which was the rude fortification of our British ancestors. The last syllable is therefore redundant here, but it points to the fact that it was a fortified place even before the Romans made it so.

*Colne*: This name clearly shows that it was a Roman colony, even if there was no other testimony to that effect, but the numerous coins which have been found, and the ruins of the camp which may still be traced, are conclusive.

*Covington*: In Domesday, this is Covinctune. Probably it took its name from the existence of a convent at the place, though no historical evidence of such a fact now exists.

*Denton*: In Domesday Book, this is Dentone. *Dene*, *Dan*, *Deane*, in Saxon, a hole or a low place. That is exactly what Denton is, and so is Dean, in Bedfordshire.

*Diddington*: This is written in Domesday as Dodintone, and Dodinctun, that is the town of the Does, and is another instance of the many names in the county that refer to the deer, while the title of the county takes its name from the pursuit of them.

*Ellington*: There is considerable difference in the way this word is spelled in Domesday Book. In one place it is Adelinhine, and in another it is Alyngton. In Saxon *Aedelan* was a nobleman, and this may supply the origin of the name.

*Elton*: Probably derives its name from *Ael* or *El* and *Avon* or *Tavon*, the high brow of the river Avon.

*Earith*: *Eur*, in British meant water, and *Hythe* was a station or port.

*Eynesbury*: There are, or rather were, a great many ways of spelling this word, Ernulfesbery, Arnulphesbiry, Einulvesberie, Eynolvesberi, Henolvesbiry, Ainsbury, and even Amesbury. *Ainulph* was "a pious person," who had a hermitage here.

*Farcet*: In King Edgar's time this was Fearreshefod, and the changes are Fearresheafod, Fearresheved, Farseved, Farshed, Farcet. It was also called Woodsheved. Farcet may thus be rendered Ferry's-haven or Ferry's-ford.

*Fletton*: A brook called the Fleet runs through this village.

*Folksworth*: In Domesday Book it is called Folchesworde. The top of the hill seems to have been fortified.

*Gidding*: In Domesday Book all the Giddings are called Redings, but later writers spell the word Geding, Geddinge, Gidinga, and Gidoing. The change from R to G supplies the origin of the name. *Gerefa* by abbreviation becomes Gereve, or Grave and Reve. These latter words were originally a name of office, but became afterwards a name of dignity. This was probably, therefore, the residence of a Shire-reve.

*Glatton*: In Domesday Book it is Glatune. *Gladh* is river in British. A brook runs through the village.

*Godmanchester*: Writers have frequently written this name Gormanchester. Gale states that there was a well here famous for the cure of leprosy, which was called by our Saxon ancestors Gormes; but probably a better explanation is that it took its name from Gorman, a famous Danish Chieftain, and Camden says:—"The town from Gorman's camp first took its name." A pond in the parish is still called Gorman's pond.

*Gransden*: In Domesday Book this place is called Grantensedene. The brook on which the place stands, or is adjacent to, is low in comparison with the surrounding hills, and although it empties itself into

the Ouse, and not into the Granta, yet the source of it is nearer the latter than the former river.

*Grafham*: (See Gidding).

*Haddon*: In Domesday Book it is Adone. The Anglo-Saxon Adune meant downward. The village can only be reached by going down hill.

*Hailweston*: In Dugdale it is spelt Halyweston. *Haelan*, in Saxon, meant to heal or cure, and there were curative springs in the parish. It is due west from the Roman city of Eynesbury.

*Hamerton*: In Domesday Book it is Hamblestone. It has been suggested—but it can hardly be considered a satisfactory explanation—that being near Alconbury, a place of coinage or metal work, this became the dwelling place of smiths, or forgers, accustomed to the use of *hammers*.

*Hemingford*: In Domesday Book it is Emingforde. Stukeley says that meadows were anciently called Henings, and Dugdale writes Hemingford, Heunford.

*Hartford*: In Dugdale, this is written Hereford, and is, therefore, the hart's ford, another instance of a place-name connected with the forest state of the district and its deer.

*Fenstanton*: In Domesday, it is Standstone. Therefore the word fen has been a later prefix. Standstone, is evidently Strand-town, and means the town is on the edge or side of the river.

*Hilton*: Like Hilton in Durham, it is the town on the hill, though the hill in this case is not a large one, except it is regarded in comparison with the surrounding flatness.

*Hinchingbrook*: Possibly from hind, another instance of the deer forests; but *hingene*, in British, meant overlooking, and in that case it would be a place overlooking the brook.

*Holme*: *Holm*, an island.

*Houghton*: In Domesday Book it appears as Hoctune, and in Dugdale as Octune. *Halt*, in British, is sea. The fen lakes close to were called meres, *i.e.*, seas.

*Huntingdon*: This is pure Saxon, and needs no interpretation.

*Hurst*: This name appears in Woodhurst, Old Hurst. *Hyrst* means a woody place.

*St. Ives*: From St. Ivo.

*Keyston*: In Domesday Book, Kestestun and Chevelston. Possibly the residence of Kettel, who left possessions to the Abbey of Ramsey.

*Kimbolton*: *Cimbal* in Saxon, and *Cimbel* in British, meant a hollow in the ground.

*Leighton*: In Domesday Book this is Lectone and Lestune. *Legh* is ground lying untilled, or wildly over-grown. *Ley* is a place.

*Molesworth*: *Mull* is mill with the Lowland Scotch; *worth*, a place of safety.

*Morborn*: Or Moorburn. *Burn* and *brook* are synonymous, and the word, therefore, explains itself.

*Needingworth*: The British word *Nydhn* meant to turn, and the river makes a remarkable turn here. The place is sometimes in old MSS. written Nydingworth.

*St. Neots*: Obtained its name from being the place of the shrine of St. Neot.

*Offord*: Over the ford.

*Old Weston*: In some old MSS. this is written Wold Weston; that is, a hilly place void of wood.

*Overton*: In Domesday, these parishes are written Ovretune. Probably the origin is that they were across the river Nene, from the important Roman station at Castor.

*Papworth*: Sometimes this place has been written Papeworde, and Pappewrde.

*Parton*: In Domesday Book these parishes are spelled Pachstone. Its origin is probably from *Pocus*, or *Pecus-town*, a place for breeding sheep. Its high situation favours this, as it is well known that the Spanish mountains and the hills in the Isle of Wight produce famous flocks of sheep.

*Perry*: From pier or peer, to look out upon, the village standing high.

*Pidley*: From the British *Pen*, a mountain or hill, as Pendley in the north.



*Ramsey*: That is the Ram's island. *Ey* and *ea* are frequent terminals in Fen names, and mean island.

*Raveley*: This place is also written Reveley. Its origin is probably from *rivus*, a brook.

*Ripton*: This place derives its name from *ripae*, being water running between two banks.

*Sawtry*: Until the present century, this place was generally written Saltrey or Saltry. In Domesday, it is Saltrede. *Saltus*, in ancient law books, means old timber trees, and *tre*, in British, is equivalent to *ham* in Saxon.

*Stibbington*: In Domesday Book it is written *Sibestune*. *Sibb*, in old English, is peace, and it is possible that some treaty of peace was concluded here, especially as it stands on one of the largest Roman and Saxon roads, although there is no historical record of the fact.

*Somersham*: In Domesday, it is Summerlede. It is probably a Saxon interpretation, summer station of the Romans.

*Southoe*: In Domesday Book, this is Sutham, and in other ancient writings it appears as Sutho and Sudham. It means the South town.

*Staughton*: The town on the *Stow*, *i.e.*, running water.

*Stow*: A dwelling place.

*Spaldwick*: *Spey* is the passage of a river; *wica* is a town or village.

*Stilton*: The word *stiil*, in British, means a column or pillar. It is possible that a pillar or column commemorating some event once stood here.

*Stanground*; Or Strandground, for so it should and used to be written, and which means a quay or place of shipping business, in support of which there is historical evidence.

*Stukeley*: Stiff clay.

*Swineshead*: In Domesday Book, it is written Swinestede and Swineshefet. *Stede* means a place, which would make the origin of the word to be Swines place, which is sufficiently explanatory.

*Thurning*: The last syllable, *ing*, has no distinct meaning of its own, but is only used as further expressive of the preceding word, as, for instance, in first, firstling. The *Thurn* is probably Thorn, and if so, the origin of the word would represent a place standing in thorns.

*Toseland*: In Domesday Book it is written Toselunt. It possibly derives its name from the obsolete Latin, *Tostare*, to burn, the elevated situation of Toseland making it probable that it may have been used as a place for beacons.

*Upton & Upwood* carry their own meaning with them.

*Warboys*: In Domesday Book it is written Wardesbuse, *i.e.*, the guard or ward of the wood.

*Waresley*: In Domesday Book this is written

Wedresleie, and Wederesle, probably from Verdier, the Keeper of the Forest.

*Washingley*: In Domesday it is Wayingeleia. A watery place is what the first word means, while the Domesday word represents a public way.

*Wistow*: The first syllable means water, and *stow* a dwelling place; for *guy*, *uy*, *uys*, *ey*, *y*, and *i* alike denote water.

*Wyton*: In Domesday Book, Witune. See *Wistow*.

*Woodston*: The Saxons were very fond of giving the names of their heathen deities to places, and this was probably named from Woden.

*Wood Walton*: That is Wood-wood-town, a redundancy of expression by no means uncommon.

*Woolley*: The first syllable was originally *Wood*-ley, which sufficiently explains the etymology.

*Yaxley*: There is no place in the county which has been more differently spelled than this, a few of these variations are:—Acleia, Acley (in Dugdale), Jakele, Geakeslea, and Lacheslei in Domesday. This last exactly explains it, viz., a place by the lake, that is by Whittlesey Mere.

*Yelling*: In Domesday Book this is Ghellenge and Gellinge. *Gh* and *g*, with the Saxons, had often the same sound as *W*, therefore the place would be Welling, and no doubt so called from the medicinal springs there.

## Chapter XXXV.

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### MISCELLANEOUS.

#### BOROUGH ENGLISH.

In the Cotton M.S. are the following particulars of the peculiar customs of the Manor of Godmanchester, but from what source they were derived is not quoted: “Also it is ordeigned and statutyd that if any man of the s<sup>d</sup> towne of Gumycester have two or three sons by one woman, lawfully begotten, the younger of the s<sup>d</sup> sons shall be the ayer, according to the use and custome of borough English, and although that he have had two or three wives, and each of them children, neverthelesse the younger sone of the first wife shall be the heire. Also that if any man have purchased any lands or tenements w<sup>th</sup> his wife y<sup>t</sup> is leffull for

the s<sup>d</sup> man, while he is alyve, to gyve, sell, or bequeath the s<sup>d</sup> lauds or tents, without the licence of his s<sup>d</sup> wife, and such a woman shall have no dowres. Also that men children shall be of full age, so that they may gyve, sell, or assigne their land and tents, when they come to the age of XX yeares, and women at the age of XVI yeares. Also that if any man have two sons married by his lyfe, and one of these sonnes hath an ayer masculine, and the other an ayer femynyne; and if it chance after, theyse two sonnes to depart and dye, the father of them being alyve, and after it chanches the father of them to dye, then that same heir masculyne shall be the ayer, and not the ayre femynyne, though she be of the yonger son." When James the First passed through Godmanchester, on his way from Scotland to London, they met him with seventy new ploughs, drawn by as many teams of horses, and when he inquired the reason, he was told that they held their lands immediately from the Kings of England, by the tenure of so meeting them on passing through their town. This circumstance, it has been said, influenced the King to grant a charter of incorporation to the town.

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CONNINGTON CASTLE.

In Bonney's History of Fotheringhay it is stated that Sir Robert Cotton, soon after 1625, purchased the

hall of the castle in which the Queen of Scots was beheaded, and removed it to Connington, in Huntingdonshire. Mr. Gough, in his edition of Camden, supposes that Sir Robert Cotton purchased only the interior of the room—the wainscot, &c., and not the room itself. Mr. Bonney differs from this opinion, and considers that the arches and columns in the lower part of Connington Castle are those which divided the hall at Fotheringhay into three aisles.

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A SINGULAR FUNERAL.

In January, 1861, a singular funeral took place in the churchyard at Connington, viz.: that of a father, mother, and daughter. The mother had been dead 24 years, the daughter 18 years, and the father 10 days. The parties were a Mr. Dunham (who lived for many years at what is called the "Three Shire House," from the fact of it standing at the junction of three counties), his wife, and daughter. When the wife died there had been some unpleasantness between Mr. Dunham and the rector of Hargrave, in which parish the house really stands, and the consequence was Dunham would not have his wife buried, but the body was bricked up in a lean-to outhouse, and when the daughter died, her body was put with her mother's, and there they remained until the old man's death, at the age of 85, when the son had the three bodies properly interred.

GODMANCHESTER TOWN ACCOUNTS IN 1723.

The following is an account of the payments made by Robert Stocker, one of the bailiffs of the town of Godmanchester, for a half-year, from Lady Day to Michaelmas, 1723, the original of which is in the possession of the Rev. G. Pinder, of Godmanchester:

	£	s.	d.
Imp <sup>rs</sup> p <sup>d</sup> towards building the Almshouses ... ..	05	03	00
P <sup>d</sup> two Bottles of Wine for Mr. Mainlove for his preaching the ffair Sermon..... ..	0	4	00
P <sup>d</sup> M <sup>r</sup> Recorder Raby at the assizes for his fee...	1	10	00
P <sup>d</sup> the Clerk of the Assizes .....		12	00
P <sup>d</sup> that was spent at the Assizes .....		15	00
P <sup>d</sup> for 2 nails to mend the Pounde .....	0	00	09
P <sup>d</sup> that was spent at the Horshoe (sic) by ord <sup>r</sup> of the companye .....		01	00
P <sup>d</sup> for a Rump of & Rib Beef for the Election ffeast .....	0	13	6
P <sup>d</sup> My Lord Manchester's Keeper for y <sup>e</sup> Venison	0	17	00
P <sup>d</sup> Parkinson's Bill as by his Bill..... ..	7	04	00
P <sup>d</sup> 12 Jurymen their Wages .....	0	12	00
P Jo <sup>n</sup> Newman's Wages .....	0	9	4
P <sup>d</sup> Jo <sup>n</sup> Steele Wages .....	0	4	6
P <sup>d</sup> W <sup>m</sup> Cole Wages .....	0	14	8
P <sup>d</sup> Jo <sup>n</sup> Dean mending Moreland Bar .....	0	2	2
P <sup>d</sup> Jonathan Thompson baking the Pasties and for bread for the Poor..... ..	0	9	0
P <sup>d</sup> W <sup>m</sup> Cole, jun <sup>r</sup> in p <sup>te</sup> of a Bill for the Almes-house W. A..... ..	0	12	3
P <sup>d</sup> M <sup>r</sup> Town Clerk's fees..... ..	1	6	8
taxt bill .....	1	5	0
	22	17	3

Written at the back is the following statement of receipts:

Rec <sup>d</sup> from M <sup>r</sup> Goode .....	10	90	00
Rec <sup>d</sup> of M <sup>r</sup> Peacock for half a year's rent in money besides two tax bills .....	16	5	00
Rec <sup>d</sup> part of the fishing Rent .....	01	0	00
Rec <sup>d</sup> of Bird in p <sup>te</sup> of meadow rent .....	2	14	0
Rec <sup>d</sup> of Su: Sutton part of rent for Rushes ... ..			
Rec <sup>d</sup> of W <sup>m</sup> Stevenson for a ——— .....	0	5	0
Rev. Deane.....	30	4	0

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EJECTED MINISTERS UNDER THE ACT OF  
UNIFORMITY.

The following ministers were ejected from their livings in Huntingdonshire under this Act:—

Bluntisham.....	Mr. James Bedford, B.D.
Bottlebridge .. ..	Mr. Simon King.
Elton .....	Mr. Cooper.
Hemingford .....	Mr. Heath.
Lutton.....	Mr. Wm. Hunt, B.A.
Overton Longueville	Mr. Edward Spinks.
Overton Waterville	Mr. Gibson, M.A.
Overton ... ..	Mr. Robert Wilson, B.A.
Stanground. ... ..	Mr. Rd. Kidder (afterwards Bishop of Bath and Wells).

Mr. Scott was also ejected from a Huntingdonshire living.

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A TRADITION OF COVINGTON.

Mr. W. Lewis Baker, in a paper read on the occasion of re-opening Covington parish church after restora-



tion, said:—"There is at Covington a tradition that must have been handed down through many generations that the church once had a spire, which was destroyed by the cannon of Oliver Cromwell. Part of this tradition has recently been verified, for in taking down the east and middle buttresses of the nave, some spire stones were found, also two treads of a small winding staircase. There was, therefore, once a spire possibly surmounting an early English tower, but the tradition that it was destroyed by Cromwell cannot be true, because the spire stones were found built into masonry of the decorated period, of an age three centuries before his time.

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ORIGIN OF STILTON CHEESE.

Stilton cheese was first made by a Mrs. Paulet, of Wymondham, near Melton Mowbray, who supplied a celebrated sporting innkeeper, named Cooper Thornhill, of the "Bell" Inn, Stilton. Thornhill got a great name for his excellent cheese, and used to sell it for half-a-crown a pound.

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EARTHQUAKE IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE.

In March, 1845, a shock of earthquake occurred at Huntingdon. It was preceded by a loud rumbling noise, and every house in the town was more or less affected by the shock. It was felt in a similar manner

at Godmanchester, and all the towns and villages within eight or ten miles of Huntingdon. The Governor of the County Gaol described it in these terms:—"A severe shock of an earthquake was felt here about nine o'clock on Wednesday evening; it seemed to shake the prison to its centre, every part was affected, and the inmates were alarmed. The floors and furniture in my house were observed to move whilst a loud report resembling thunder beneath was distinctly heard in all parts of the prison. Several prisoners said 'the cells moved with them,' but seemed to have no idea of the cause." The shock was also distinctly felt at Kettering.

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CURIOUS OBJECTS.

Near Earith there is a curious artificial mound, called Belfar's Hill, supposed to have been thrown up by those persons who took arms against William the Conqueror, in 1066, after he had defeated Harold at the Battle of Hastings.—In a north-easterly direction from Huntingdon, stands the small villages of Old Hurst and Woodhurst, near the former of which, about two miles from St. Ives, on the road to Ramsey, is a very large square stone, in the form of a chair. The remains of a very ancient inscription are discernible, but this inscription is wholly illegible, and there is no record concerning it. The only remains of the once famous Abbey of Ramsey which exist is

the dilapidated gateway.—An ancient monument is to be seen in Overton Longueville Church, to which the village folk lore has attached a curious legend. The monument represents a Knight in Armour, cross-legged, and a lion at his feet. The legend concerning this monument is thus told by Pinnock:—"A Lord Longueville, who, in fighting with the Danes near this place, received a wound in the abdomen, so that his bowels fell out; but wrapping them round the wrist of his left arm, he continued the combat with his right hand till he had killed the Danish King, and soon after fell himself."

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RIOTS.

In 1815, a violent riot occurred at Ramsey originating, it is supposed, in the scarcity of provisions and low wages. The windows of persons who were most obnoxious were broken, and a variety of mob-tricks committed.—In May, 1816, a considerable inclination again manifested itself to riot, and continued for some days. It had so increased on Tuesday, the 19th, that it was considered necessary to call out the Huntingdon Yeomanry Cavalry, who proceeded to Warboys immediately, but as their assistance did not appear absolutely necessary, they returned to Huntingdon, where they remained under arms during the whole of

Tuesday night. The following morning a messenger arrived, stating that tranquillity had been restored at Ramsey, and the cavalry were accordingly dismissed. At the ensuing Assizes, at Huntingdon, in August, W. Tibbs, W. Barrett, and John Bree were arraigned for a misdemeanour, "By joining in a rabble of about 200 in the town of Ramsey, which had put the inhabitants in the fear of their lives and property, by breaking the windows and doors of Robt. Beard, the Overseer, and insisting on the price of flour being lowered." They were all convicted, and sentenced to two years hard labour and imprisonment. The Judge, Chief Justice Gibbs, during the progress of the trial, expressed a doubt whether he should not direct a fresh indictment to be preferred, and have the prisoners tried for their lives.

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#### ANCIENT STONES.

The men employed in levelling Huntingdon Market Place, in May, 1870, came upon a large block of stone, a few inches below the surface. The plan of it was in shape of a cross, and measured about 3 feet across and 18 inches thick. It appeared to have been the base stone of an old market cross, the iron dowell connecting the upper part remaining. A similar stone may be seen in use as a guard stone on the road near St. Ives; and another, with the upper part in good condition,

standing in Ramsey Churchyard.—While excavating, near Wansford, to make the London and North Western Railway, in 1844, the workmen turned up some curious carved stones of great antiquity, representing human figures, lions, heads, &c.

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STONE COFFINS AT HARTFORD.

During the restoration of Hartford Church, near Huntingdon, in April, 1862, a large number of stone coffins were discovered, upwards of 20 in all, of various dates, mostly broken into four pieces, and employed as quoins. The lids of eight or nine, some of which are of small size, as if for children, bore the Saxon symbol of the cross and anchor. There were several more with richly floriated crosses of later date upon them; all were much mutilated, and none in their original position, owing, probably, to the church having been at various times within the last three centuries repaired and enlarged, its exterior excavated for vaults, and other works carried on. The hands of a recumbent figure were found. The walls of the body of the edifice bore traces of rude distemper paintings, amongst them full length figures of a queen, St. George and the Dragon, and large Maltese crosses, &c., were upon the columns and walls.

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PROVISIONS IN 1822.

In June, 1822, the wife of a farmer living in Ramsey Hollow occupying land which then belonged to Mr. Jones, of Flood's Ferry, brought to a shop in Ramsey 12lbs. of good butter, for which she received, in exchange, one stone of salt—the butter realising 5d. a pound, and the salt 5s. per stone.

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PHENOMENA AT WOOD WALTON.

In January, 1850, in the neighbourhood of Wood Walton, near Stilton, where the soil had been excavated to supply material for the construction of the Great Northern railway, some curious phenomena were brought to light. The bones of land and sea animals were discovered in the same spot, at a depth of between 20 or 30 feet below the earth's surface, and judging from the large size of the former, and their peculiar form, it is probable that they belonged to an extinct race.

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A ROMAN JUPITER.

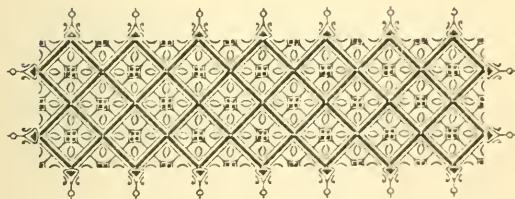
In 1826, in a ditch dividing the meadows, lying between Earith and Bluntisham Church, was found a bronze statuette, inlaid with silver, of a Roman Jupiter Martialis, in nearly perfect preservation. The statue is now in the British Museum.

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A CHURCH CENSUS IN 1837.

The *Cambridge Chronicle*, of May, 1837, published the following census of attendance at Churches in Huntingdonshire, on a given Sunday within the month:—

	Population (census of 1837).	No. attended Church.
Holywell-cum-Needingworth ..	951 .....	85
Bluntisham with Earith .....	1,381 .....	200
Colne .....	476 .....	32
Somersham.....	1,402 ..	240
Pidley with Fenton .....	406 .....	66
Warboys.....	1,550 .....	170
Bury .....	358 .....	83
Ramsey .	3,006 .....	430
Woodhurst.....	408 .....	71
Houghton with Wyton ..	649 .....	94













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